

# **An Exploratory Study of the Position Accorded to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) by Business in Gauteng Province**

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## Declaration

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I dedicate this dissertation to my late father who gave me a phonics lesson on the difference between ‘hall’ and ‘hole’ at the age of six which ultimately created a quest for knowledge that has driven me to get to this academic level.

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## **Executive Summary**

The aims of this research were to ascertain the position accorded to the UKZN by Gauteng business relative to the position sought by the UKZN, to determine the perceptions Gauteng business has of the UKZN and to determine any differences in perceptions between the UKZN and the Gauteng business community in terms of UKZN's positioning. The perceptions of Gauteng business are crucial to know as this is the economic hub of Africa and seeing that as the UKZN seeks to be the 'Premier University of African Scholarship', establishing the perceptions will provide a good measure of whether the UKZN is fulfilling this sought position.

The objectives were fulfilled by conducting interviews with randomly selected Gauteng businesses and conducting an in-depth interview with an official of the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department. The findings from both research techniques were compared to fulfil the objectives of the investigation.

The findings reveal that business in Gauteng does not regard the UKZN as the best institution in South Africa and that business relevance, research capability, international recognition, staff quality and management were qualities that a good university should have. Academic excellence was identified as the most important attribute by Gauteng business, for which Rhodes was perceived to perform the best closely followed by UCT. The UKZN, though performing well on this attribute, was not perceived to be the best performer.

The key conclusions drawn from the investigation were that though the UKZN seeks to be positioned as the 'Premier University of African Scholarship', the UKZN was only mentioned by a small number of respondent businesses, and only as the third or fourth best university in South Africa. There were differences in perception of the UKZN as the Public and Corporate Affairs Department states that the UKZN was accessible, transforming, redressing past imbalances, research driven and offering quality education, whilst business in Gauteng were of the opinion that although the UKZN was perceived to be a reputable

university that is accessible, critically engaged with the society it serves in terms of demographics and an ethical university, it is also believed that the UKZN has been unsuccessful in its rebranding, having compromised academic integrity and lacks exposure.

The crucial recommendation from the research was that the UKZN should position itself as an institute of research in the fields of HIV/AIDS and food security particularly. These positions arise from the fact that the UKZN has internationally acclaimed status in these fields such as the new gel developed by the UKZN's Medical School which has gained global mention with regards to the fight against the HIV/AIDS scourge. The food security programme offered by the UKZN is also a global leader. Such a position would be unique to the tertiary environment in South Africa supported by a marketing mix that illustrates this in every facet.

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# **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

According to the UKZN (University of KwaZulu-Natal) Strategic Plan:

“The University of Kwazulu-Natal came about through the merger of the former Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal in 2004. The merger of universities across the country ushered in a radical reconstruction of the national higher education system. It brings to this landscape the opportunity to build a university that is truly South African and truly global. It is an opportunity to shape an institution that represents both the richness of our heritage and the imagination of a free, democratic, egalitarian South Africa”.

The merger facilitated the aims of the UKZN to become an institution that is reflective of the communities within which it operates.

“By international standards, UKZN is a very large and complex institution, with just under 40,000 students spread across five campuses (Edgewood, Howard College, Medical School, Pietermaritzburg and Westville) “It spans two centres, one in the coastal city of Durban and environs, and the other in the provincial capital of Pietermaritzburg, some 80 km inland. Pietermaritzburg is a large administrative centre, lying at the heart of a rich and diverse rural, agricultural and forestry area” (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007 p.1). An institution of such size would only be supported by a vision that stretches beyond the borders of this nation and hence the envisaged position of ‘Premier University of African Scholarship’ as stated in the University’s vision and mission.

The UKZN aims to “give effect to public or private partnerships, including mutually advantageous dynamic agreements with local municipalities and government. The University has a range of partnerships with municipalities, embassies, trusts, foundations, corporates and individuals, both nationally and internationally, that ensure that the institution is socially engaged. The University will develop and sustain projects involving public or private partnerships in key areas such as agriculture, health and social development” (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.8).

The importance the UKZN accords the multiple stakeholders, gives rise to the problem that previous positioning studies for the UKZN have looked at only the present students, scholars (potential students) and Pietermaritzburg business. The UKZN has enjoyed positive perceptions from these stakeholders and a favourable position. However, these stakeholders are the ones most likely to perceive UKZN favourably. They have either selected UKZN or are in close proximity to UKZN. The UKZN cannot measure its fulfilment of its sought after position of being the ‘Premier University of African Scholarship’ by satisfying only these stakeholders. It must also address the needs of other stakeholders and be perceived favourably by them. The Gauteng business sector can be seen as a major stakeholder and there is a need to research it as such.

Given the fact that the University of KwaZulu-Natal seeks to be the “Premier University of African Scholarship” (UKZN, 2008), it is of utmost importance to determine the perceived position of the UKZN from the point of view of the Gauteng business sector. Because this is the commercial hub of Africa and South Africa, their perceptions are of notable value. This is due to the fact that as the largest consumer of UKZN graduates and a provider of funding for research, they would be a large stakeholder with regard to the university. The investigation undertaken in this study focuses on Gauteng, not only because this province is the economic hub of African business, but also because it can be seen as a microcosm of Africa which will provide a way of testing whether the UKZN is fulfilling its sought after position of “Premier University of African Scholarship”. The importance of this investigation is that as, according to UKZN Strategic Plan

2007, the UKZN is regarded as a leader in research in the South African tertiary studies market, funding is required to maintain and further strengthen this position. This will only be attracted to this institution if it demonstrates the attributes required by the various sectors in the economic hub of Africa, Gauteng.

Naude and Ivy (1999, p.126) state that in order for organisations to remain dominant and viable in the long term there is a need to recognise the independence of their consumers. They state that “students are raw materials, graduates the product and prospective employers the customer”(p.127). With such an environment, the need to understand consumer perceptions is ever more crucial.

Bisschoff (1998) (cited in Bisschoff 2002, p.103), states that geographical boundaries are becoming irrelevant in South Africa and globally, as tertiary institutions no longer just cater for their surrounding environs exclusively. They have become more accessible to greater numbers from what were previously regarded as remote capture areas. Bisschoff (2002, p.103) states that with such developments, marketing and promotional activities have to be broadened to include areas outside the previous areas of focus. This supports the idea of determining the position accorded to the UKZN by businesses in Gauteng.

Foreman (2005, p.1) mentions that due to the intense competition by an increasing number of non-profit organisations, traditional sources of funding are declining whilst demand for non-profit services such as tertiary education is increasing. Foreman (2005, p.1) states that to overcome this it is crucially important for the creation of “social partnerships and alliances with commercial organisations”. Therefore the UKZN has to be viewed in the correct light by stakeholders such as Gauteng business not only as employers of the UKZN graduates within the various sectors but also for purposes of future funding and partnerships. Therefore this study will investigate the position of the UKZN as perceived by business in Gauteng as compared with the position the institution seeks.

## **1.2 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this exploratory study was to obtain the accorded position of the UKZN by Gauteng business as a stakeholder. In order to achieve this the following objectives were set out:

1. To identify the sought after position of the UKZN according to the university's Corporate and Public Affairs Department.
2. To obtain the position accorded to the UKZN by business located in Gauteng.
3. To obtain perceptions of the UKZN relative to its competitors, from the Gauteng business community.
4. To identify any differences in perceptions between the UKZN and the Gauteng business community in terms of the UKZN's position.

## **1.3 Overview of Methodology**

In order to achieve these objectives, interviews were conducted with selected members of the Gauteng business community and with the University's Public and Corporate Affairs Department. Triangulation of the findings from the research instruments was carried out so as to overcome any weaknesses in one research instrument and to improve the research validity.



## **1.4 Chapter Overview**

The next chapter (Chapter 2) focuses on the literature related to positioning to establish the theoretical reasoning which can be used to underpin interpretation of the questions posed in the various research instruments, to enable discussion of the findings on the basis of the literature and to provide a context for presenting the conclusions and offering future recommendations. Chapter 3 looks at the UKZN in the context of the investigation, providing a brief history of the UKZN, the UKZN today, UKZN shareholders and the UKZN positioning. The fourth chapter presents the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. Chapter 5 presents the findings of an in-depth interview with the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department and the interviews with the Gauteng business community.

Chapter 6 discusses these findings on the basis of the objectives of the investigation, combining the relevant literature and findings. Chapter 7 offers recommendations to the UKZN with regards to the marketing mix and steps in positioning Chapter 7 further suggests the limitations to the research and offers recommendations for future research.. A research conclusion to the study is offered within this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2 POSITIONING**

The literature provided in this chapter provides a foundation from which to understand and research the UKZN's position as perceived by Gauteng business. This is done by explaining the importance of positioning a service offering in a competitive operating environment, mistakes that are commonly made with regards to positioning and how the UKZN may avoid these or rectify them by repositioning itself to maintain or create a distinct place in the consumer's mind. The steps to positioning guide how positioning should be conducted to obtain the desired position and the marketing mix, which is the implementation stage, presents how the elements of the mix have to reflect the sought after position through price, promotion, place, physical evidence, people, process and product on offer.

### **2.1 Introduction**

According to Blankson, Kalafatis, Cheng and Hadjicharalambous (2008, p.106) positioning is regarded as one of the most important components of marketing theory and practise as positioning is geared towards value creation to an organisation and its offerings. The aforementioned authors state that as features of products become less distinctive, intangible aspects gain prominence whereby the manipulation of consumer perceptions and positioning of an organisation and its offerings become important.

A good positioning aids marketing strategy by clarifying the brand's essence, what goals it helps the consumer achieve and how it does so in a unique way (Kotler, Shalowitz and Stevens 2008, p.235) . According to Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.235) "the result of positioning is the creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a cogent reason why the target market should buy the product". Shostack (1987, p.34) states that "when a firm or provider establishes and maintains a distinctive place for itself and its offerings in the market, it is said to be successfully positioned".

This view expressed by Shostack is also shared by Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.220) as these authors state that marketers plan positions that give their products and services the 'greatest

advantage' in the chosen target markets. With an ever-increasing competitiveness in the service sector, positioning effectively is an important task for marketers (Shostack 1987, p.34 and Lovelock 2007, p.185).

## **2.2 Definition of Positioning**

“Positioning refers to both the place a product or brand occupies in the customers’ minds relative to their needs and competing products or brands, and to the marketer’s decision-making intended to create such a position. Thus, the positioning notion comprises both competitive and customer need considerations” (Walker, Mullins and Boyd 2006, p.154). Schouten and McAlexander (1989) concur and show that an appropriately positioned good or service satisfies consumer needs. Wilson and Gilligan (2003, p.348), Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2001, p.166) and Kotler (1997, p.297) and Kapferer (1992 cited in Proctor 2000, p.206), Schouten and McAlexander (1989, p.69) and Dibb and Simkin (1993, p.30) also concur with Walker *et al.* (2006) by stating that positioning can be regarded as a process of creating an image and value so that customers within the target segment understand what the firm or brand stands for in relation to competitors.

Positioning is deeply concerned with the separation of products and services and guaranteeing that they do not become commodities (Payne, 1993, p.120 and Proctor, 2000). Payne (1993, p.120) suggests that, for an organisation to maximise its potential, it should position itself in its core market segments where it is impartially and personally distinguished in a beneficial manner over competing offerings. An example offered is that of Porsche which is positioned in the prestige segment of the car market with a differential advantage based on performance. The views of Payne are shared by Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.198) who propose that positioning deals with “arranging for a market offering to occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers.”

Keller (2008, p.98) and Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.97) state that positioning means the identification and establishment of points of parity and points of difference to enable the ideal brand identity and image. Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.97) state further that an offering that has an identifiable identity and focus to a specific target segment needs, will insure the purchase of the product on offer and will also offer larger margins through value addition.

Keller (2008, p.98) further states that,

“Unique points of difference provide a competitive advantage and reason why consumers buy the brand, on the other hand some brand associations can be roughly as favourable as those of competing brands, so they function as points of parity in consumers’ minds and negate potential points of difference for competitors. In other words, these associations are designed to provide no reason why not for consumers to choose a brand”.

Payne (1993, p.120) suggests that positioning entails the introduction of new brands into a market and the repositioning of old brands. In support of Payne’s suggestion, Lovelock (2007, p.1999) further states that positions are hardly fixed, they develop overtime in response to changing market condition hence repositioning and introduction of new brands within the market. Finally Aaker and Shansby (1982, p.56) state that there are several associations that a good or service may receive which create a total impression. Positioning entails the selection of those positive associations that require emphasis and the negative associations that need to be de-emphasised (Aaker and Shansby 1982, p.56). Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.219) offer a quote which gives substance to the views expressed by Aaker and Shansby “products are created in the factory but brands are created in the mind.”

## **2.3 Importance of Positioning**

Positioning provides focus for the development of marketing strategy. It entails the discovery of a niche according to certain variables as consumers in different segments perceive the product or service offering differently (Hooley, Saunders and Piercy 2004, p.269 and Strydom 1999, p.84). Positioning, according to Hooley (1995, p.421), is concerned with long term strategy. Hooley proposed the idea that positions take time to develop and are not created by short term advertising campaigns space (p.421). Hooley states further that positions offer a sustainable way to differentiate and create a competitive advantage and can be controlled to evolve and change over time as markets develop, mature and die (p.421).

Well executed brand positioning aids marketing strategy by giving clarity to what the brand is all about, its uniqueness relative to competing alternatives and why consumers should purchase it (Keller 2008, p.98). Products that are not differentiated will fail to achieve their full potential and lose market share as time elapses (MMM 2007, p.57).

### **2.3.1 Importance of Positioning Services**

Positioning is deemed to be critically important for services due to the competitive environment consumers are presented with which can confuse them due to the multitude of service offerings inside a market sector (Payne 1993, p.120). Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.219) offer a similar view as they state that consumers are overloaded with information regarding goods and services therefore they can not continuously re-evaluate products each time they make a purchase decision. To simplify this arduous task, consumers position products and services within their minds (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.220). Marketers are of the belief that they can not leave the positions of their various offerings to chance (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.220).

Schouten and McAlexander (1989, p.70) are of the same opinion that, the failure by a consumer to perceive the service offering as being unique may lead to an indeterminable market position which is ineffective. They state further that uniqueness is not adequate and that the consumer must realise some perceived added value in the service offering.

The intangible nature of services is regarded as requiring a different marketing task to a product. As a service cannot be marketed on the basis of features, positioning allows the intangible benefits of a service to become tangible by offering physical evidence (Payne 1993, p.102). An example is when “customers to a hotel expect an intangible benefit – cleanliness, this view can be reinforced by plastic covered glasses in rooms and a paper cover over the lid of a lavatory stating ‘sanitised for your protection’ ” (Payne, 1993, p.102). This Payne suggests aids the customer to link cleanliness with the service offering, strengthening the position that the hotel intends to portray. The intangibility and experiential nature of services requires a clear positioning strategy of value in aiding potential consumers to get ‘a mental fix’ on a product that would otherwise be rather vague (Lovelock 2007, p.195 and Payne 1993, p.101). Positions, can be inherent and unintentional and develop over time or these positions can be deliberate as part of strategy and conveyed to the target segment (Payne, 1993, p.101).

The objective of planned positioning, according to Payne (1993, p.101), is to make a delineation in a consumer’s mind which differentiates the organisation’s service from those offered by competitors. He goes on to make the point that the creation of a position of value is of paramount importance to the service or good; the position should be based on identifiable qualities or qualities important to the consumer and these qualities should be of value to the consumer’s buying decision (Payne, 1993, p.101). This, according to Payne (1993, p.101), means that there is no such item as a ‘commodity or standard service’. Every service has the capacity to be viewed as unique by a consumer. In addition, purchasers have differing needs and are, as a result drawn to different service offerings.

The importance of positioning to services cannot be understated since a differentiation in the consumers' mind of the service offering is crucial in a competitive environment for a service which is by nature intangible. The next section deals with common errors made in positioning which hinder the creation of a differentiation in the consumer's mind which is critical to positioning.

## **2.4 Positioning Errors**

The failure to choose a required position in the market and the creation of a marketing plan to achieve and retain this position can lead to unfavourable outcomes (Lovelock 2007, p.195) or errors in positioning.

The unfavourable outcomes are as follows:

1. "The organisation (or one of its products) is pushed into a position where it faces head-on competition from strong competitors" (Lovelock 2007, p.195).
2. "The organisation is pushed into a position which nobody else wants because there is little customer demand there" (Lovelock 2007, p.195).
3. Confused-positioning, in the opinion of Cant, Strydom, Jooste and Du Plessis (2006, p.144), Hooley *et al.* (2004, p.270) and Grancutt, Leadley and Forsyth (2004, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte, 2008, p.101), is another positioning error whereby the marketer changes the positioning of the brand too frequently.
4. Under-positioning, refers to a scenario where customers have a vague idea of a certain brand (Cant *et al.* 2006, p.144, Hooley *et al.* 2004, p.270 and Grancutt *et al.* 2004, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte 2008, p.101). An example is that of Pepsi when it introduced the Crystal Pepsi, only to find that consumers were not impressed as they did not perceive clarity to be an important benefit in a drink Kotler (1997, p.298).
5. Over-positioning, is another positioning error where consumers have a narrow image of a brand (Cant *et al.*, 2006, p.144, Hooley *et al.* 2004, p.270 and Grancutt *et al.*, 2004, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte 2008, p.101). Cant *et al.* (2006, p.144) give the example of "the

Blue Train which was perceived as being exorbitantly expensive and for overseas tourists only. The result is that many consumers who do in fact possess the disposable income to take a trip on the train don't ever consider it". Furthermore, Mont Blanc sells pens that cost several thousands of pounds and also sell pens below 100 pounds which is of importance to a consumer to know (Hooley *et al.* 2004, p.270).

6. Doubtful-positioning, exists when claims regarding a brand are difficult to believe (Cant *et al.*, 2006, p.144, Hooley *et al.*, 2004, p.270 and Grancutt *et al.*, 2004, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte, 2008, p.101).

When such positioning errors occur there is often a need to reposition.

## **2.5 Repositioning**

According to Mckinsey and Company (2010, p.8), when repositioning, marketers "must embrace the idea that they are brand stewards while customers define their relationship with the brand and determine the basis for the relationship. A steward must spend more time deeply understanding what customers really think about the brand and where potential bridges to growth and new positioning exist".

Over time a firm may need to reposition its service offering as a result of scenarios such as:

- "The original positioning strategy was inappropriate: over-estimation of an organisation's competitive advantage or of the size of the sub-segment that the positioning was intended to appeal to could force a re-evaluation of positioning strategy.
- Where the nature of customer demand has changed
- Service providers seek to build upon their growing strengths to reposition towards meeting the needs of more profitable sub-segments. In many service industries, organisations start as simple, no frills, low price operations, subsequently gaining a



favourable image which they use to ‘trade up’ to relatively high quality or high price positions” (Palmer 2001, p.182).

Authors Walker, Mullins and Boyd (2006, p.163) state that “although marketers should generally seek a distinctive position for their brands, attaining such a position imposes constraints on future strategies. If shifts in the market environment cause customers to reduce the importance they attach to a current determinant attribute, marketers may have difficulty repositioning a brand with an intensely perceived position on that attribute. Repositioning carries with it the threat of alienating part or all of the product’s current users regardless of success with its newly targeted group. Success in its repositioning efforts may well ensure losing its current group of users”.

Despite these challenges, Keller (2008, p.117) states that with established brands, competitive pressure requires shifts in positioning strategy over time. The changing of this positioning strategy presents the issues of:

- How to deepen the meaning of the brand to tap into core brand associations (laddering)
  - How to respond to competitive challenges that threaten an existing positioning (reacting)
- (Keller, 2008, p.118).

Keller (2008, p.107) distinguishes between points of difference and points of parity. Points of difference are attributes or benefits that consumers associate a brand with, rate positively and perceive that they cannot find the same in any competing alternative. This is similar to the unique selling proposition.

Points of parity associations are attributes or benefits that may not be unique to the brand but maybe shared with other brands such as banking services (Keller, 2008, p.109). Keller states that points of parity represent necessary but not necessarily sufficient conditions for brand choice.

### 2.5.1 Laddering

Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.237) state that points of difference are “attributes or benefits consumers strongly associate a brand, positively evaluate and believe that they could not find to the same extent with a competitive brand”. Keller (2008, p.118) states that though the identification of points of difference to dominate competitors on determinant attributes offers a solid way to create an initial position, once the target market obtains an understanding of how the brand relates to alternatives in the same category, necessity arises to deepen the meanings associated with the brand positioning. The abovementioned researcher states, this can be done by exploring underlying consumer motivations in a product category to uncover the relevant associations. Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.237) state that “strong, favourable and unique brand associations that make up points of difference may be based on virtually any attribute or benefit”.

Laddering as described by Tybout and Sternthal (2010, p.22) involves the rechanneling of efforts from focusing on the brand to rather focus on the consumer. At the bottom of this hierarchy information about attributes is used to portray the unique aspects of the brand whilst the highest level focuses on the person. At this level greater emphasis is given to how the consumer feels from using the brand. This, according to Tybout and Sternthal, allows a brand to differentiate itself from competing brands even if they ultimately achieve attribute parity.

### **2.5.2 Reacting**

Competitive advantages (points of difference) exist for a short period of time before competitors seek to match or exceed them (Keller, 2008, p.120). Keller proposes three options to react to such scenarios:

- “Do nothing: if the competitive actions seem unlikely to recapture a point of difference or create a new point of difference, then the best reaction is probably to just stay the course and continue brand building efforts.
- Go on the defensive: if the competitive actions appear to have the potential to disrupt the market some, then it may be necessary to take a defensive stance. One way to defend the positioning is to add some reassurance in the product or advertising to strengthen points of parity and points of difference.
- Go on the offensive: if the competitive actions seem potentially quite damaging, then it might be necessary to take a more aggressive stance and reposition the brand to address the threat. One approach might be to launch a product extension or advert campaign that fundamentally changes the meaning of the brand”.

Keller (2008, p.121) states that a brand audit can assist marketers to determine the impact of competitor threats and the appropriate competitive stance. Researchers Cant *et al.*(2006, p.144) and Hooley (1995, p.427) suggest that there are strategic options marketers have when repositioning, namely:

### **2.5.3 Incremental or Gradual Repositioning**

According to Hooley (1995, p.427) and Cant *et al.*(2006, p.145) incremental or gradual repositioning is where customer wants are changing or expected to change, or the technology for delivering customer satisfaction is developing, movement from the current positions may become inevitable. Such changes may be incremental or radical.

### **2.5.4 Radical repositioning**

When the position occupied is not favourable such as being too remote from the target segment or being too divergent from competitors then radical repositioning is required. This might be the attack of a completely new segment (Hooley 1995, p.428 and Cant *et al.* 2006, p.145).

### **2.5.5 Innovative repositioning**

Cant *et al.* (2006, p.145) states that innovative repositioning is “where the planner finds a new strategic position that offers market opportunities not previously exploited or utilised”.

### **2.5.6 Brand Repositioning**

Authors, Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.202), Cant *et al.* (2006, p.144) and Hooley (1995, p.427), brand repositioning is done when it is sought to improve a brand’s competitive position and ultimately increasing sales through taking market share from competitors.

### **2.5.7 Image Repositioning**

Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.202) state that image repositioning occurs when the product and the target market remain unchanged. The objective of this is to change the image of the product in its current target market. Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.202) offer this example: “In the early 1990’s Adidas were seen as reliable but dull. The company created an image of ‘street credibility’ in an attempt to reposition the brand to appeal to the consumer in the sports shoe market.”

### **2.5.8 Market Repositioning**

Market repositioning as expressed by Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.202), entails the product remaining unchanged but is repositioned to have an appeal to a new market segment. Thus for example, “Lucozade, a brand of carbonated glucose drink, was originally targeted as a product for individuals suffering illness, particularly children. In recent years it has been repositioned as an isotonic drink aimed at young adults undertaking sporting activities” (Drummond and Ensor 2001, p.202).

The various methods of repositioning referred to above are made use of to correct an inappropriate position, respond to consumer changes and to target more lucrative segments. The next section deals with the various levels of positioning which determine how an organisation or strategic business unit is positioned relative to the competition.

### **2.6 Levels of Positioning**

Walker *et al.* (2006, p.159) state that there are several levels of positioning analysis, namely, “company, business unit, product category and specific product line or brand” and that these analyses are crucial in determining how an organisation or business unit is positioned relative to competitors. The various levels of positioning analysis enable the identification of the consumers’ choice of alternatives.

Lovelock (2007, p.195) and Walker *et al.* (2006, p.159) agree that positioning can occur at different levels, depending on the nature of the business. A single position may be sought for an entire organisation, for a specific service outlet or for a specific service offered at that particular outlet (Lovelock 2007, p.195). Consistency is crucial when positioning various service offerings offered at one site, as the perceived image of one may spill over onto others in particular if there is perceived relation (Lovelock 2007, p.195).

The investigation being undertaken here focuses on the UKZN, which is an organisation. Corporate positioning, therefore, is the level of positioning that is applicable.

### **2.6.1 Corporate Positioning**

Palmer (2001, p.185) states that the traditional role of branding has been that of seeking differentiation between products. Of late, brands have become applicable to organisations. He says this has been evident in services where the intangibility of the product results in the credentials of the service provider becoming an important selection criterion. Palmer states that “the notion of an emotional relationship to a product has been extended to develop an emotional relationship between an organisation and its customers” (p.185).

Proctor (2000, p.206) states that there has been a development whereby there was recognition that “positioning is not simply an issue between the brand owner and customers, but between the brand owner and every one of its stakeholders.” According to the abovementioned author, positioning has become a matter of ‘positioning what to whom’. Morin (2006, p.8) defines corporate level positioning as “a disciplined effort undertaken by an organisation to define how it wants to be perceived by its most important audiences. It results in an honest statement distinguishing characteristics and unifying attributes”.

The author further continues by stating that an organisations definition of its business position enables a brand to be strengthened and maintained in the global marketplace. The author further states that corporate positioning is the disciplined management effort to guide what you want people to think about your business (Morin 2006, p.8).

Morin (2006, p.8) proposes what should be inherent in an effective corporate position:

- “It must be aimed at the future because that’s where we’re headed and that’s where we will spend the rest of our lives
- It should provide a sense of cohesiveness and support various parts of the organisation with the strength of the entire organisation’s distinguishing attributes
- It must be authentic, credible and believable. No business has the resources to buy credibility
- It must speak in human terms. Computers, machines and processes are the stuff of every business, but devices and formulas have never made a purchase”.

The terms corporate image and corporate positioning appear to be used interchangeably since the definition of both terms by various authors emphasise that an organisation that is correctly positioned will be able to survive in a highly competitive industry. Van Heerden and Puth (1995, cited in Mattioda 2004, p.2) state that “corporate image is the public perception or understanding of organisations’ attempts to express their ‘personality’. In essence the corporate image is the position the organisation holds in the mind of the consumer”.

Theaker (2001, p.74) proposes the idea that a powerful corporate identity and a positive corporate image are advantageous to an organisation. Skinner and Von Essen (1999, p.332) give support to this statement stating that “research in the United States has shown that a company with a good corporate image has the following advantages:

- “The public is more likely to assume that it produces good products
- The public is more likely to pay more for its products and buy its new products

- The public is more likely to consider the company's stock a good investment and the stock is likely to suffer less in a general market decline than the stock of a company that does not have as good an image".

Skinner and Von Essen (1999, p.332) express the idea that "the image or identity should reflect the truth accurately, precisely and be appropriate".

## **2.7 Types of Positioning**

According to Strydom (1999, p.91), there are various ways in which a firm may position its goods and services in response to different environmental scenarios. They will be briefly described in the sections which follow:

### **2.7.1 Mono-Segment Positioning**

Mono-segment positioning is a positioning strategy whereby a product is positioned in such a way that it appeals to one segment on a perceptual map. In such a scenario the authors state that the chosen segment is quite unique with regards to its benefit requirements (Strydom 1999, p.91 and Study Marketing 2010, para.1).

### **2.7.2 Multi-Segment Positioning**

Here the marketer chooses to benefit from opportunities in different segments and will probably lead to different positioning objectives in different target market segments. (Strydom 1999, p.91 and Study Marketing 2010). An example offered by Strydom (1999, p.91) is that of Johnson and Johnson extending their target market for baby shampoo and baby oil to other market segments such as beauty-conscious women.



### **2.7.3 Standby Positioning**

This positioning, according to Strydom (1999, p.91) exists when an organisation anticipates changes in consumer demand and competition which can alter the presently occupied position, therefore a marketer can choose to reposition only when the time is ideal. According to Study Marketing (2010, para.3), Standby positioning is a positioning strategy whereby it may not be in the best economic interests to switch from a multi-segment positioning to a mono-segment positioning (on the assumption that there are several brands, each positioned to serve the needs of one market segment) even if there would be a resultant increase in market share. In such a scenario, a firm may choose to implement a mono-segment positioning strategy only when forced to do so, in order to minimise response time the firm prepares a standby plan specifying the product or products and their attributes as well as the details of the marketing program or programs that will be used to position the new product.

### **2.7.4 Anticipatory Positioning**

Strydom (1999, p.91) states that “in this case, the relevant brand is positioned in a low turnover area with the expectation that one or more market segments will develop towards it. Anticipatory positioning entails the positioning of a new brand on the premise that consumer needs may evolve with time” (Study Marketing 2010).

The marketer therefore anticipates a market position that may have substantial long term potential. Volkswagen followed this kind of positioning with the Beetle in the 1950s in South Africa. At that stage, the demand was low but VW expected an increase in the demand for small economical cars over the long term”.

### **2.7.5 Initiative Positioning**

This is when a new brand is positioned in direct competition with presently available brands and with the underlying idea that a significant number of existing brands' consumers will switch to the new brand (Strydom, 1999 p.92 and Study Marketing 2010).

### **2.7.6 Adaptive Positioning**

Auhtors, Strydom (1999, p.92) and Study Marketing (2010) state that adaptive positioning, entails the positioning of a new brand on the premise that consumer needs may evolve with time. "This is a reactive option, as opposed to all the options mentioned previously, which are all proactive" (Strydom 1999, p.92).

### **2.7.7 Defensive Positioning**

When a firm occupies a dominant position in a market segment, it becomes vulnerable to imitative positioning. Therefore it may pre-empt competitors by introducing an additional brand in a similar position for the same market segment (Study Marketing 2010, para.7). The additional brand is termed a 'fighting' brand. This method of positioning diminishes significantly the market potential of the competitor even though actual profitability of the brand may be low (Strydom, 1999, p.92).

### **2.7.8 Stopgap Positioning**

Strydom (1999, p.92) states that "this option refers to cases in which the enterprise makes a limited investment in a brand which is positioned in a presently unprofitable side of the market. The expectations are however, that the market may develop in that direction. The aim is therefore to obtain an early market share, technical experience and an early lead on competition".

Consumers or potential targets have perceptions about differences between varying goods or services. Marketers seeking a set position in the mind of the consumer will seek to bundle their offering with attributes which offer bases for positioning (Walker *et al.* 2008, p.153).

## **2.8 Bases for Positioning**

According to Lovelock (2007, p.185), price and product are the most commonly used bases for positioning. However, as described below, there are several possible bases for positioning.

### **2.8.1 Attribute positioning**

Researchers Klopfer, Berndt, Chipp, Ismail, Roberts-Lombard, Subramani, Wakeham, Petzer, Hern, Saunders and Myers-Smith (2006, p.141), Benson and Hedges positioned their cigarettes on the basis of their lightness and taste; this positioning is based on attributes and is referred to as attribute positioning. Walker *et al.* (2008, P.156) state that attribute positioning is often used for physical product positioning. Attribute positioning is the most commonly used positioning strategy (Aaker and Shansby, 1982). Aaker and Shansby further state that a new offering can be positioned on an attribute which competitors have chosen to ignore.

Aaker and Shansby (1982, p.57) further state that there is always a temptation to position on the basis of several attributes however, positioning on many attributes can be difficult to execute and can create what is termed 'confused or fuzzy' image. Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.222) are also of the opinion just as Aaker and Shansby that firms should aggressively promote only one benefit to the chosen target market.

### **2.8.2 Benefit Positioning**

According to Walker *et al* (2008, p.156) benefits are directly related to the product. An example of benefit positioning is that used by Gillette Contour blades which offer an even closer shave. The positioning is based on unique benefits that Gillette offers its consumers (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.141).

### **2.8.3 Application Positioning**

An example of use or application positioning is that of Graca wine which is positioned as a wine which consumers can enjoy at various occasions (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.141).

### **2.8.4 User Positioning**

User positioning is illustrated by Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.141) using the example of bungee jumping whereby, the offering is positioned to appeal to the thrill seekers.

### **2.8.5 Competitor Positioning**

Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.237) state that well known brands in a specific category can be used to position. Competitor positioning according to Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.141) can be illustrated through the use of BMW as an example, where BMW would find benefit by positioning its vehicles directly against those of Mercedes Benz, its closest rival in South Africa. Rix (2007, p.133) states that for some products it is ideal to position directly against the existing market competitors. An example offered by Rix (2007, p.133) is that of Intel which sought to position itself as superior to its competitors by paying computer makers to include the caption 'Intel Inside' in their advertisements. According to Rix (2007, p.133) for some products competitor positioning is not the way to go especially if the competitor has a strong market position.

### 2.8.6 Quality or Price Positioning

According to Aaker and Shansby (1982, p.57) positioning on price or quality is beneficial and pervasive. Many brands offer more with regards to service, features or performance with a higher price reflecting this higher quality to the consumer. Rix (2007, p.133) proposes that quality and price positioning entails creating in the consumer's mind a specific combination of price and quality that the brand represents. An example given is that of outlets that sell high quality merchandise at high prices such as Rolex watches. Price positioning is shown by the example used by Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.141) where Pep Stores is known for unbeatable prices. Quality positioning is represented by Edgars, which is known by consumers for its high quality clothing (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.141).

According to Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.137) positioning in the South African context can be viewed in light of consumers who regard Woolworths as a retailer with a brand of high value in the retail market. The sheer mention of Woolworths to consumers creates an association of high quality food, clothing and service and ultimately they expect to pay more (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.137). According to Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.137) Woolworths does not have as many customers as Shoprite-Checkers. Shoprite-Checkers places greater emphasis on selling large volumes of each product, rather than selling a limited range of products at a premium price as Woolworths does. This means that Woolworths is positioned as a top brand or premium brand retailer (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.137).

Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.137) propose the idea that positioning can also be the way in which an organisation, its products or the brand name of its product is presented to consumers in the market. Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.138) offer an example of such products, namely, Amstel beer which is positioned as a premium brand, and therefore the target segment Amstel marketers direct the brand at expect to pay more for Amstel relative to other SAB brands, such as Castle and Black Label.

According to Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.139), consumers offer the top position to the organisation, product or brand that is the market leader and which is well known. They go on to indicate that consumers compare competing alternatives to the market leaders offering. To the consumer the product or brand regarded as the best may not have the largest market share; however, being at the top of the mind of the consumer is of greater value than having the greatest market share (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.139). The authors state that to maintain top of the mind awareness there should be significant promotion.

Firms seek to be unique on the basis of criteria defined as important by its consumers. A firm therefore selects one or more criteria or attributes identified by its consumers as important and uniquely positions itself on these (Anonymous 1, 1998, para.36). These unique criteria are a basis for differentiation in a competitive market and differentiation is the reason why consumers purchase a service or good over competing alternatives (Walker *et al.* 2008, p.151).

## **2.9 Positioning and Differentiation**

Walker *et al.* (2008, p.150) state that positioning is primarily concerned with differentiation whereby an existing brand in an overcrowded marketplace of similar competing alternatives can occupy a distinctive position in the minds of targeted consumers. Zwierzynski (2007, para.3) states that “differentiation is to show the difference”. In the business context, Zwierzynski (2007, para.3), Kotler (1997, p.282) and Hooley *et al.* (2004, p.375) state that differentiation is to create a benefit that consumers perceive to be important to them or being of greater value than what they can attain from elsewhere. Kotler (1997, p.282) states further that it is not sufficient to be just different, a potential consumer has to acknowledge this difference and somehow feel it satisfies their need better.

Zwierzynski (2007, para.3) and Walker *et al.*(2008, p.151) state that as an organisation is growing from inception, differentiation can be a way of creating a clientele and ultimately enables the charging of a premium price as the organisation will be delivering more value to the consumer.

Zwierzynski (2007, para.15) proposes ways in which to obtain successful differentiation:

- “Know your customers really well
- Pick a blend of differentiation methods that, in the eyes of your consumers, truly sets you apart
- Talk about your differentiation in terms of consumer benefits
- Tell everyone about what differentiates you often
- Keep your differentiation fresh by listening for changing customer needs”.

The satisfaction of these positioning requirements on the basis of what is important to the consumer leads to an identifiable position in the consumers mind in an environment where the consumer faces various competing alternatives.

Services can be differentiated on the basis of “ordering ease, delivery, installation, customer training, customer consulting, maintenance and repair, miscellaneous services, personnel, channel or image” (Kotler, 1997, p.301).

The ways in which to differentiate are unique to each industry and can be based on the product itself, the delivery system by which it is sold, which means that competitive firms should seek to differentiate their offering at every customer contact point. (Porter 1998, p.14 and Kotler 2008, p.221). An example offered by Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p.221) is that of Unilever which manufactured a hair product line to suit each hair type. The campaign pursued by Unilever was

that of a brand that understood the problems and solutions of ethnic hair of South African women.

An example of differentiation, according to Keller (2008, p.109) is:

“Nivea became a leader in the skin cream category by creating strong points on the benefits of gentle, protective and caring. As it leveraged its brand equity into categories such as deodorants, shampoos and cosmetics, Nivea found it necessary to establish category points of parity before it could promote its brands points of difference. These were of little value unless consumers believed its deodorant was strong enough, its shampoo would produce beautiful enough hair, and its cosmetics would be colourful enough. Once points of parity were established, Nivea’s heritage and other associations could be introduced as compelling points of difference”.

The competitive advantages identified by the firm must be communicated to the consumers to be of any value in the market.

### **2.9.1 Number of Differences to Promote**

Marketers believe that only a single benefit should be promoted to the target market as a unique selling proposition Kotler (1997, p.296), Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy (2008, p.398) and Walker *et al.* (2008, p.164). Rosser Reeves cited in Kotler (1997, p.296) states that an organisation “should develop a unique selling proposition for each brand and stick to it”. Walker *et al.* (2008, p. 164) state, the unique selling proposition proposes how the marketer seeks to attain sustainable competitive advantage.



Every brand, as maintained by Kotler (1997, p.296) and Lovelock (2007, p.188) must select an attribute and sell itself as the best at this attribute. According to Kotler (1997, p.296), consumers tend to remember 'the best' messages.

The abovementioned author holds the view that, if an organisation emphasises one of these 'best' positions and pleasingly provides, it may be best known and remembered for its strength. Walker *et al.* (2008, p.166) emphasise that it is generally desirable for there to be one element upon which the offering is differentiated from others and at most two whether physical or perceptual. The use of several attributes only confuses the target market (Walker *et al.* 2008, P.156).

Kotler (1997, p.296) proposes that "double benefit positioning may be required if two or more organisations are laying claim to being the best on the same attribute. The idea then becomes to locate a unique niche within the target segment. He offers the example of Volvo which positions its vehicles as the 'safest' and 'most durable'. These two benefits, according to Kotler (1997, p.298), are compatible as one expects that a very safe car would also be durable".

Kotler (1997, p.298) maintains that there are even situations where there has been triple benefit positioning. The example of this he gives is that of Aquafresh, the toothpaste that offers three benefits: anticavity protection, better breath and whiter teeth, all three of which are sought by many consumers. Kotler shows how the manufacturer, Smith Kline, came up with the solution to this by manufacturing a toothpaste that came out of its tube in three colours, visually supporting the three benefits. This offered the benefit to the manufacturer of Aquafresh of counter segmentation, which is the drawing of all three segments instead of one.

Strydom (1999, p.84) mentions that at times attempts are made to position a product or brand on two or more characteristics at once. An example offered is that of Toyota which emphasises economy and reliability. Strydom (1999, p.85) cautions that though it is appealing to position on the basis of several characteristics seeing as it can be frustrating when some outstanding elements are not communicated, an exercise to communicate several characteristics at once can lead to confused positioning. Walker *et al.* (2008, p.163) state that most successfully positioned goods and services are positioned on the basis of one or at the most two determinant attributes which may be physical or perceptual in nature. The authors further state that positioning on more than the two attributes simply confuses the consumer (Walker *et al.* 2008, p.163).

According to Walker *et al.* (2008, p.166), the ability of a brand to be a market leader is based on how many consumers believe that it fulfils the determinant benefits.

## **2.10 Criteria for Effective Positioning**

Several researchers (Hooley 1995, p.422, Payne 1993, p.101 and Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223) state that there are certain conditions that have to be satisfied in order for positioning to be effectively, mainly:

- There must be a clear view of the target market and customers aimed for. Given that the same position in a market may be viewed differently by different customers, it is essential that the impact of the positioning on all the key targets be understood and also that the impact on non-target segments be anticipated.
- Similarly, the benefits on which the positioning is built must be important to the target customers (Hooley 1995, p.422 Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223). Payne (1993, p.101) states that the difference should be of high value to a significantly large consumer base.

- The positioning should build on real strengths for the company and or its brands. Ideally, these strengths or combination of core competences used to create the strengths should be unique to the company (Hooley 1995, p.422).
- The difference should be distinctly superior to other offerings such that consumers may not obtain the same benefit elsewhere (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223).
- Affordability is the ability and willingness of the target customers to pay for the difference (Kotler and Armstrong 2008,p.223). Any additional cost of the distinguishing characteristics will be perceived as sufficiently valuable to compensate for any additional cost (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223).
- Profitability is the ability of the company to achieve additional profits as a result of introducing the difference (Payne 1993, p.101, Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223).
- Finally, positions should be communicable. They should be capable of being communicated to the target market. This often means that they should be simple and uncomplicated, amenable to translation into attractive and creative advertising or other communication means (Hooley 1995, p.422). The difference should be easily communicable and visible to buyers (Payne 1993, p.101,Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p.223).

Positioning that satisfies the above conditions allows an organisation's service or product to be at the top of the consumers mind and this can be communicated through the marketing mix, which is the application of marketing strategy.

## **2.11 Positioning and Marketing Strategy**

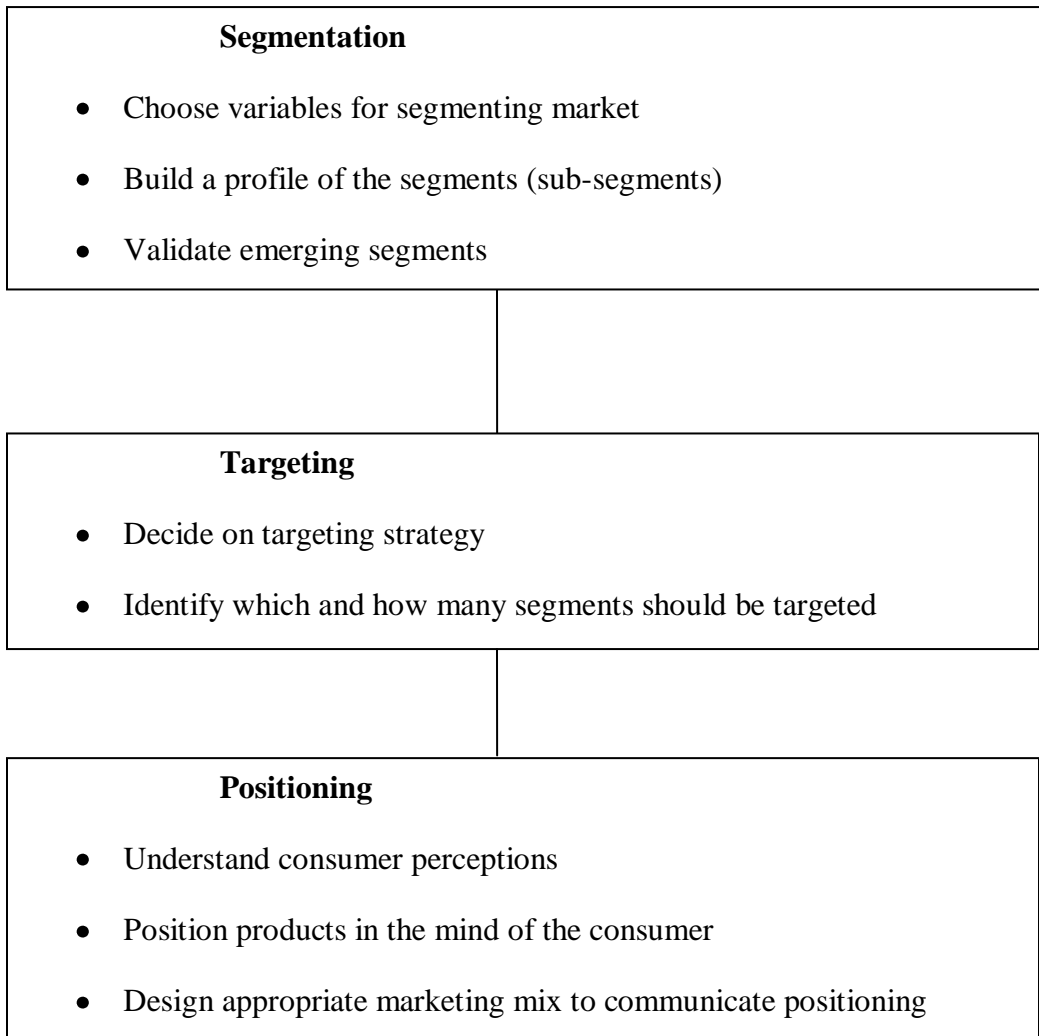
According to Keller (2008, p.98), settling for a position requires the determination of a frame of reference through the identification of a target market and the nature of the competition, the ideal points of parity and points of difference brand association. This essentially means there is need to know who the target markets are, who the main competitors are, how the brand is similar to these competitors and where the brand differs with competitor brands.

Webster (1992 cited in Ellson 2004, p.21) states that:

“Marketing as strategy is the emphasis at the SBU (Strategic Business Unit) level on market segmentation, targeting and positioning in defining how the firm is to compete in its chosen businesses”.

The diagram below illustrates the process of segmentation and targeting which leads to positioning in the chosen market.

**Figure 2.1 The Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning Process**



(Grancutt *et al.*, 2004, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte 2008, p.101)

### 2.11.1 Segmentation

Wilson and Gilligan (2003, p.318) and Ellson (2004, p.22) state that segmentation is the division of various groups of buyers and potential buyers into smaller groups within which similar patterns of buyers' needs exist. The authors state that by doing this the marketer seeks to divide the market into more strategically manageable subsets, which can be targeted and satisfied more accurately by making a series of small changes to the marketing mix.

Researchers, Andreasen and Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.139), Walker *et al.* (2006, p.144) and Ellson (2004, p.22) propose similar steps for segmentation:

- Selecting the different bases for segmenting the market
- Creating profiles of the resultant segments
- Measuring each segment's attractiveness

Ellson (2004, p.21) states that "there is a greater need for more precise modification of goods or services and marketing effort to consumer or user requirements based on the acknowledgement that different products or services are generally consumed by different groups of people".

According to Ellson (2004, p.22) the three main objectives of segmentation are to:

- Learn how the brands or products in a class are perceived with respect to strengths, weaknesses and similarities
  - Learn about consumers' desires and how these are satisfied or unsatisfied by the current market
  - Integrate these findings strategically, determining the greatest opportunities for new brands or products and how the product or its image should be modified to produce the greatest sales gain.
- Wilson and Gilligan (2003, p.323) state that after the identification of

segments, the marketer needs to acknowledge that this is not the end, but there should be continuous monitoring and updating if the segmentation is to maintain its usefulness.

After segmenting the market, a target or a set of targets that best fit the organisations competencies are then selected.

### **2.11.2 Targeting**

Unfortunately not all segments are attractive (Ellson 2004, p.25). This researcher states that “all customers may be important, but some are more important to the company than others and the most important strategic decision is to choose those most important customers”. Czepiel (1992, cited in Ellson, 2004, p.25) states that large markets hardly present high returns and small markets offer the best opportunities. The idea of not all segments being attractive is driven by the notion that segments have to offer the greatest potential for an organisation to fulfil its objectives.

Andreasen and Kotler (2008, p.138) state that good marketing commences with the correct target audience which leads to success of an organisation. Wilson and Gilligan (2005, p.347) and Kotler (1997, p.269) state that upon deciding how to segment the market, the marketer then faces the task of which segments to approach. There are three similar factors given by the authors which need to be considered namely:

- The size and growth potential of each segment
- The structural attractiveness
- The organisations objectives and resources

Andreasen and Kotler (2008, p.139), Walker *et al.*(2006, p.144) and Ellson (2004, p.22) propose similar steps for targeting:

- Weigh market attractiveness and competitive position factors to reflect their relative importance
- Assess the current position of each potential target market on each factor
- Project the future position of each market based on expected environmental, customer and competitive trends
- Evaluate implications of possible future changes for business strategies and resource requirements.

Ellson (2004, p.24) states that there are 3 main advantages in market targeting:

- Marketing opportunities and gaps may be more accurately identified and appraised
- The product and marketing mix can be finely tuned to the needs of the market
- The effort can be focused on segments that offer greatest potential for the company to fulfil its objectives.

For targeting to be effective, Ellson (2004, p.26) proposes:

- That each segment must be narrowly defined so as to only contain one consumer type and
- A segment should be defined so that all the realistic and feasible alternatives consumers consider for a given purchase and accept that there will be some differences in buying decisions.

Targeting enables an organisation to identify opportunities that exist within a market which have not been occupied by a competitor or gaps where consumers have not been adequately satisfied. Targeting identifies the best segments for the organisation to target. Positioning is then the place a marketer wants to occupy in the mind of that target market. Therefore targeting enables the development of positioning strategy.



According to Walker *et al.* (2008, p.157) consumers make use of several attributes to evaluate a brand; however the ones that influence consumer choice are minimal. Targeting enables the marketer to determine what attributes are determinant for target markets which forms the basis of positioning (Walker *et al.* 2008, p.157).

## **2.12 Developing a Positioning Strategy**

According to Lovelock (2007, p.185) and Doyle (1983, cited in Brooksbank 1994, p.10), positioning strategy focuses on creating, communicating and maintaining differential advantage and valued differences by consumers whom they seek long term relations with and how it will compete with rivals in the segment.

## **2.13 Analysis for Positioning**

Lovelock (2007, 196) states that analysis is the basis of an effective positioning strategy and the various types of analysis are created with the intention to identify opportunities and threats for the organisation in the competitive environment. The analysis required for positioning are discussed below.

### **2.13.1 Market analysis**

Du Plessis *et al.* (2005, p.52) state that the objective of market analysis is to comprehend fully the dynamics of the market. Lovelock (1984, p.135), Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.33) and Du Plessis *et al.* (2005, p.52) state that market analysis is required to ascertain criteria such as the overall level, actual and potential market size, customers, customer segments, trend and geographic location of demand.

According to Lovelock (2007, p.196) and Drummond (2001, p.33) the estimation of the potential size of the total sales in a market enables an organisation to develop a marketing strategy and ascertain areas of potential growth.

Lovelock (2007, p.196) states further that supplementary research may be desired to shed light into the needs and choices of potential consumers among the different segments and how they view the competition. This analysis enables an organisation to ascertain what is of importance to a consumer. From market analysis determinant attributes are established.

### **2.13.1.1 Determinant Attributes**

Determinant attributes (attributes that ascertain choice), according to Lovelock (2007, p.189), are often subordinate to the product characteristics that are crucial to consumers, but these are the attributes where important differences between competing alternatives are apparent to consumers. The marketer, as Lovelock (2007, p.189) explains, has the task of finding out which attributes are determinant, as they can be utilised to create the basis for a positioning campaign.

Lovelock (2007, p.189) notes that it is of importance to find out who the decision maker is in choosing a specific service. For example, in the choice of a hospital where the decision maker may be the end user, this is the patient or an intermediary in the form of a doctor. In this case, according to Lovelock (2007, p.189), the marketer role is to determine what attributes are important to the consumer in selecting the intermediary and what attributes are important to the intermediary in selecting the service provider. Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.33) state that the identification of these important attributes helps the organisation to ascertain if it has the capacity to serve those particular consumer needs.

Walker *et al.* (2006, p.160) state that positioning can be based on several attributes. They mention that, although in theory consumers make use of several attributes to evaluate brands and products, the attributes that do influence consumer choice are few. They state that “even an important attribute may not greatly influence a consumer’s preference if all the alternative brands are perceived to be about equal on that dimension.”

Lovelock (2007, p.190) and Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.33) propose the notion that consumers choose amongst alternate service offerings on supposed differences between them,, however, the most important attributes are not always the ones that separate the competing service from another. For example, air travellers rank safety as their most important attribute but, since most American airlines are viewed as being safe (unless the airline has experienced a recent crash), safety is not an attribute that can sway consumers’ choice amongst airlines (Lovelock, 2007, p.189).

Lovelock (2007, p.189) states that there is another issue in evaluating service characteristics and developing positioning strategy in that some attributes can be easily quantified whilst others are qualitative and subjective. He goes on to explain:

“Price for instance is a straightforward, quantitative measure. Punctuality of transportation services can be expressed in terms in terms of the percentage of trains, buses, or flights arriving within so many minutes of the scheduled time. Both of these measures are easy to understand and therefore generalisable. But characteristics such as a hotel’s ambiance or degree of luxury are more qualitative and therefore are subject to individual interpretation, although consumers may trust the evaluations of an independent rating service such as Mobil Travel Guide or AAA”.

The intangibility and experiential nature of services requires a clear positioning strategy of value in aiding potential consumers to get ‘a mental fix’ on a product that would otherwise be rather vague (Lovelock, 2007, p.195) and (Payne, 1993, p.101).

Winner (2007) proposes that marketers have to seek answers to the following questions:

- “What dimensions do consumers use to evaluate product offerings in the industry or category?
- How important is each of these dimensions in the decision making process?
- How do you and competition compare on the dimensions?
- What decision processes do the customers use?”

According to Lovelock (2007, p.196), market analysis provides an insight into consumer needs, preferences and perceptions of competition amongst the various members of the chosen segments which is the very foundation of positioning.

### **2.13.2 Internal corporate analysis**

According to Du Plessis *et al.*(2005, p.151), Drummond and Ensor (2001, p.83) and Kotler (1997, p.82), internal corporate analysis is crucial for an organisation to determine what it is capable of. The authors state that in order to take advantage of opportunities identified in the external audit the organisation has to have the adequate resources and capabilities to realise the fruit of these opportunities.

Du Plessis *et al.*(2005, p.152) state that internal analysis can be conducted at varying levels within the organisation, that is, it can focus on the business as a whole, a strategic business unit (SBU) or on an area of the organisation. Kotler (1997, p.82) states that this entails that the business needs to evaluate its internal strengths and weaknesses periodically.

Kotler (1997, p.84) and Du Plessis *et al.*(2005, p.152) propose a framework for an internal analysis which involves firstly the identification of what are termed as the internal strategic factors these being the mission and objectives of the organisation and the resources and capabilities, such as people, finance, operations, marketing and knowledge resources and capabilities. The second part of the internal corporate analysis involves the assessment of these factors relative to the past performance, to the organisation's competitors, to the success factors for the industry and to the 'best in class' organisations.

On the basis of the internal analysis, Lovelock (1984, p.136) states that the organisation will be in a position to choose a few target market segments and be willing and able to serve these segments with novel or existing services.

### **2.13.3 Competitor Analysis**

According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2001, p.110), the scrutiny of competitors within an industry is of importance since actions of competitors can affect an industry that presented itself as an attractive one. Du Plessis *et al.* (2001, p.111) propose that weaknesses of competitors can present opportunities for rival firms and an organisation's response to competitors' marketing strategies can have significant impact on that organisation's success.

According to Palmer (2001, p.178), the intention to create a competitive advantage should be supported by a thorough analysis of who the firm's competitors are. This researcher further elaborates that even disregarding the entry of new entrants into the industry, the possibility exists to identify direct and indirect competitors.) Direct competitors are normally similar in form and satisfy consumer needs in similar ways (Palmer 2001, p.178). On the other hand, Palmer states that indirect competitors may occur in different form but satisfy a primarily similar need. Palmer (2001, p.178) states that the consideration of indirect competitors is of vital importance as consumers wish to satisfy the underlying need which can be satisfied in several ways. An example offered by Palmer is that of "many customers need a cash withdrawal service which can be provided just as well by a supermarket or a petrol station. The precise form of a new competitor may appear quite unlike the established service format, but in terms of positioning within consumers' minds the new service could rank just as highly. If all that a customer needs a bank for is to withdraw cash, a petrol station may have a superior position in their mind in terms of accessibility and ease of use".

Palmer (2001, p.179) suggests that, since services can be easily copied, it does not come as a surprise that positioning strategy has become significantly more difficult in several markets. He gives the example of the United Kingdom where "banks have diversified into car leasing; gas supply into car breakdown assistance and retailers into internet service providers".

Du Plessis *et al.* (2001, p.111) propose a framework upon which to conduct a competitor analysis. The framework entails:

- Identity of competitors
- Analyse strategic groups
- Deduce competitor objectives and strategic focus
- Figure out competitor strategies
- Work out competitors' strengths and weaknesses
- Anticipate competitors response patterns

The outcome of such an analysis is that an organisation becomes aware of what competitors' strengths and weaknesses are to allow for the organisation to obtain opportunities. Lovelock (2007, p.197) states that through finding and analysing direct and generic competitors, a marketer can gain knowledge of strengths and weaknesses which ultimately offer opportunities for differentiation. The relation of this knowledge to internal corporate analysis would suggest which benefits to offer to which target segments (Lovelock, 2007, p.197).

The use of all these analyses leads to the ability to position on the basis of important attributes to the consumer which makes full use of organisational strengths and which offers the organisation competitive advantage, this being a unique and superior position relative to competitors. Upon conducting the relevant analysis, a marketer is now able to begin the actual process of positioning as competitors have been identified, determinant attributes have been found and the organisation is fully aware of its competencies.

## **2.14 The Positioning Process**

Several authors propose the same steps to follow with regards to positioning. Positioning and repositioning involve several steps (Walker *et al.* (2006, p.158), Aaker (2005, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte, 2008, p.99), Lovelock (1984, p.138) and Ferrel and Hartline (2005, p.202). These steps are applicable to both products and services in domestic or international markets and to new or existing products (Ferrel and Hartline 2005, p.202).

Multiple researchers namely Dibb, Simkin, Pride and Ferrell (2006, p.249), Walker *et al.* (2006, p.159) and Gilligan and Wilson (2003, p.441) state that though consumer perceptions play an integral role in positioning, the role of marketers is equally crucial. The authors propose steps to positioning:

- Identify the position of the competitive set
- Determine the desired positioning for the brand in question
- Develop a set of actions in order to achieve the desired position
- Decide on the appropriate brand positioning statement to communicate the positioning
- Produce a marketing communications plan to promote the brand positioning to the target audience: the target market segment and key stakeholders inside the organisation and within the marketing channel.

In the discussion below, the views of authors Walker *et al.* (2006, p.159) are mainly used as the point of reference since, while the other authors mentioned above give a similar outline, it is Walker *et al.* who provide some depth of discussion concerning each step in the positioning process.

### **Step 1: Identify a relevant set of competitive organisations**

For product positioning, Walker *et al.* (2006, p.159) and Ferrel and Hartline (2005, p.202) propose that such analysis takes a deep look into customers perceptions about types of organisations that may be considered as substitutes to satisfy the same need. Walker *et al.* (2006, p.160) state that at all levels of positioning the selection of competing organisations is crucial and the omission of such organisations or potential competitors creates the risk of imminent threat of unforeseen competitors. These researchers point out that identification of competitive organisations occurs within the competitor analysis.



## **Step 2: Identification of determinant attributes and measuring their significance to the user**

Johansson and Thorelli (1985, p.58) state that the starting point of positioning strategy is the idea that an evoked set of products can be described as different bundles of attributes which are capable of generating a stream of benefits to the buyer and user; the position that offers the greatest benefit to a producer of a good or service is one that yields the highest rating among the target segment (Johansson and Thorelli 1985, P.58).

Researchers Aaker (2005, cited in Ostaseviciute and Silburyte, 2008, p.99), Walker *et al.* (2006, p.160) and Ferrel and Hartline (2005, p.202) state that upon the identification of competing organisations through the consumer survey, the determinant attributes should be found. Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.235) explain that the identification of determinant attributes enables differentiation on attributes deemed important by the consumers. According to Johansson and Thorelli (1985, p.58), the identification of these attributes enables a marketer to develop these attributes such that they match the special requirements of the target market. Determinant attributes were discussed in the market analysis (See 2.13.1).

## **Step 3: Collect data on consumer perceptions for organisations in the competitive set**

Market analysis provides an insight into consumer needs, preferences and perceptions of competition amongst the various members of the chosen segments, which is the very foundation of positioning (Walker *et al.* 2006, p.160).

#### **Step 4 Analyse the current positions of organisations in the competitive set**

In the determination of the current position against competitors the perceptual map can be used to compare competitive offerings (Kotler *et al.* 2008, p.272). According to Cravens and Piercy (2009, p.103) the analysis of the current position enables the identification of possible positioning concepts.

A perceptual map offers a visual image of organisations or brands in the competitive set in terms of two attributes Walker *et al.* 2006, p.161). Furthermore, Walker *et al.* (2006, p.161) state that when goods and services occupy distant positions on a map, this reflects that consumers perceive them very differently and those positions that are close to each other reflect perceived likeness meaning that competition is likely to be very intense compared to those positions that are located sparsely on the positioning map. Payne (1993, p.110) suggests that positioning maps may be used to ascertain the position of competitors' services relation to selected attributes and that the analysis of the current position allows the determination of areas of core demand.

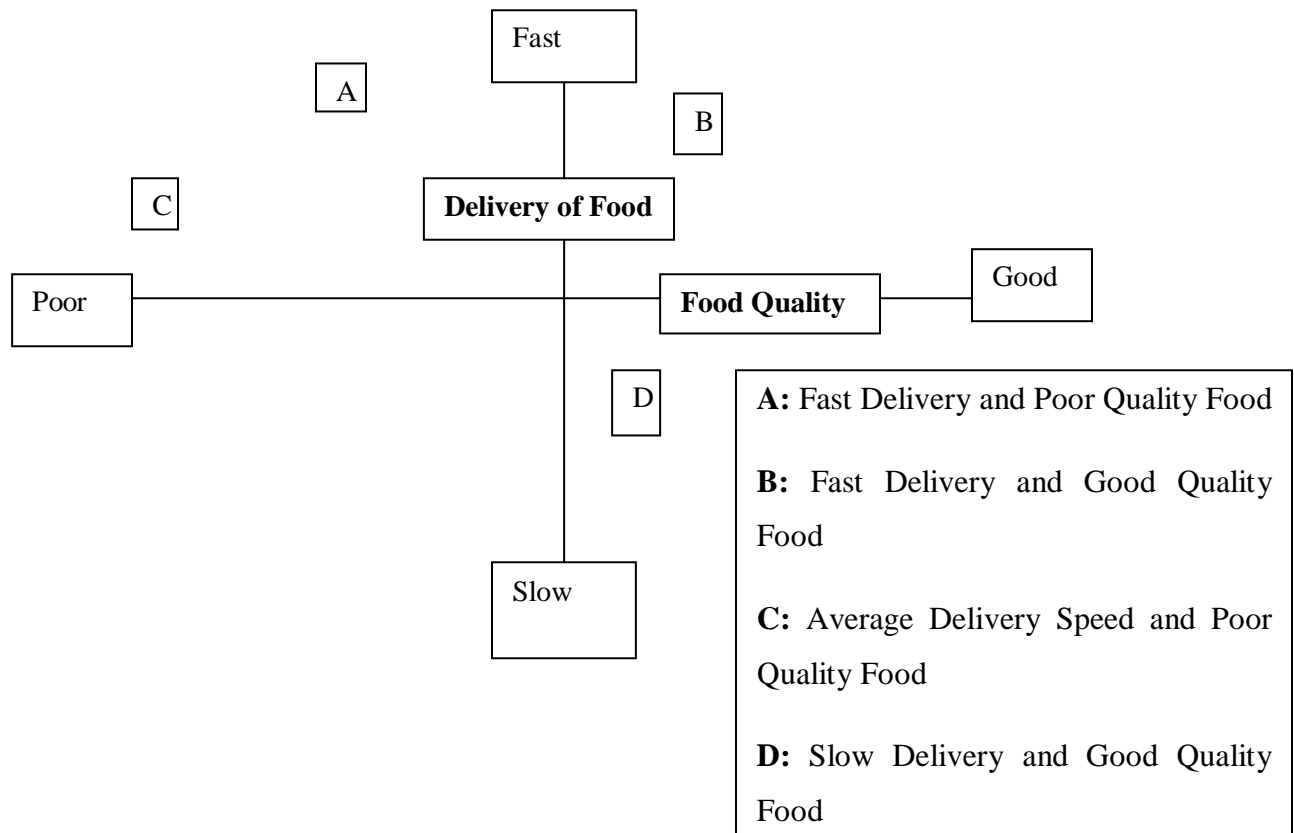
Walker *et al.* (2006, p.162) state further that unoccupied positions on a positioning map indicate opportunities for goods and services to be positioned and also offer a location upon which a good or service can be repositioned. The researchers caution, however, that such unoccupied positions can occur due to technical constraints or the position being undesirable.

Lovelock (2007, p.199) states that a positioning map is only as valuable as the validity of the information that was used to make it. Generally, he postulates that more than two attributes have to be assessed and therefore two or more maps are required. Positioning maps, he contends, have to be redrawn regularly to reflect the dynamics present in the marketplace such as when there are new entrants into the market or when repositioning by existing competitors may cause the organisations position to become obsolete.

Lovelock (2007, p.199) mentions that several different positioning maps have to be drawn for each of market segment if research reflects that there are major variations in views between segments. He suggests that graphic representations such as positioning maps are relatively easier to understand than quantitative data or large documents. Positioning maps, according to Lovelock, permit management to grasp the environment's threats and opportunities, identify perception gaps and support or refute notions that a service or its parent organisation holds a unique niche in the marketplace. The creation of a position of value is of paramount importance to the service or good. Payne (1993, p.120) offers the idea that for an organisation to maximise its potential it should position itself in its core market segments where it is impartially and personally distinguished in a beneficial manner over competing offerings.

The perceptual map overleaf shows the positions occupied by the various competitors in the fast food industry in the mind of the consumer. The fast food outlets have been positioned on the basis of food quality and delivery of food, which are important attributes to the consumer. The fast food outlets are perceived to be different and ultimately occupy distinct positions in the consumer's mind.

**Figure 2.2 Example of a Perceptual Map For Fast Food Outlets.**



### **Step 5 Determine customers' most preferred combination of attributes**

Walker *et al.* (2006, p.164) state that there are several ways in which customer preferences are measured and included in a positioning analysis. They suggest this can be done by respondents comparing an ideal product's attributes against those of an existing one and that placing these ideal points on a grid gives an ideal cluster of points.

Walker *et al.* (2006, p.165) state that a way in which to define market segments is through the differences each segment seeks. These researchers further assert that the differences between consumers' ideal points illustrate the differences in benefits they seek and this can lead to positioning analysis finding out distinct segments as well as perceived positions of varying brands.

## **Step 6 Consider fit of possible positions with customer needs and segment attractiveness**

Brown (2005, p.99) and McDonald (1996, p.101), offer various positioning options for organisations entering a market. According to Brown (2005, p.99) positioning can be:

- Close to the leader as the 'acceptable alternative'. Generally this positioning option is carried out in a manner which avoids a head-on attack (McDonald 1996, p.101). An example of this is "Avis car rental, who created a positive benefit from being number 2 behind market leaders Hertz. "Avis is only number 2, so why go with us? We try harder!" (McDonald 1996, p.101). According to McDonald, this was not only viewed as honesty but also gained public sympathy for Avis as an underdog.
- Position away from existing rivals in either  
Un-served niches or  
Innovative new positions

For an existing brand leader, sensible positions include:

- Heavy promotion of existing superiority
- Augmenting present superiorities with extra layers of differential advantage (Brown 2005, p.99 and McDonald 1996, p.101).

According to McDonald (1996, p.101) for those badly positioned organisations, the options include:

- Adjusting the offering to fit more closely with consumer needs
- Finding new unoccupied positions
- Changing customer perceptions if they are erroneous. In the 1992 British general election the Conservative Party was under immense pressure because it was regarded as the party that had lead to the disbanding of the National Health Service and increasing unemployment. The Labour Party a rival party claimed that it sought to invest in manufacturing, infrastructure and salvage the National Health Service, these being issues that had high voter appeal. The Conservative party managed to reposition the Labour Party from being investors to a party that sought to increase taxes to raise funds for their ambitious plans. This message was communicated regularly to the electorate and overturned the anticipated outcome of the election a loss for the Conservative party.
- Withdrawal from the market is another option proposed when a firm is badly positioned.

This sixth step according to Walker *et al.* (2006, p.166) “concludes the analysis portion of the positioning process and crystallises the decision about the positioning a product should hold, but can also uncover locations in the product space where additional new products could be positioned to serve customer needs not well served by competitors”.

## **Step 7: Selection of the desired position**

Upon linking the outcomes from the internal analysis which offers what the organisation can do, and ways in which to differentiate on the basis of what is important to the consumer, a position to be occupied is chosen by the organisation.

Ferrel and Hartline (2005, p.202) state that this step involves the identification of a unique position that focuses on customer benefits that the competition does not currently offer; a marketing program to leverage the firm's position and persuade customers that the firm's product offering will best meet their needs should then be developed.

## **Step 8: Writing a positioning statement**

Walker *et al.* (2006, p.166) state that after determining the desired position, a position statement should be written. This is a statement that “identifies the target market for which the product is intended and the product category in which it competes and states the unique benefit the product offers”.

According to Palmer (2001, p.176), an integral part in the development of a market position is the creation of a unified image that consistently and precisely supports the chosen market position. This message has to be consistently communicated. The marketing mix is the way in which organisations transform strategy from a statement of intent to effort in the market (Hooley *et al.*, 2004, p.52). Each of the elements of the marketing mix should be designed to add up to the sought position and therefore, decisions on the marketing mix elements cannot be considered separately from the position pursued: if elements of the marketing mix do not operate in synch, the position achieved will be confused and confusing to consumers (Hooley *et al.* 2004 p.52).

Brown (2005, p.69) states that “positioning is configuring our total offering of goods, services, place and price to address the target group’s needs in a way that is attractively different from that offered by our competition”. This configuration is implemented via the marketing mix. According to Wilson and Gilligan (2005, p.354), positioning is a fundamental element of the market planning process, since decisions on positioning have a direct bearing on the entire marketing mix, essentially stating that the marketing mix is regarded as the tactical details of the positioning strategy.

An example to illustrate this is a firm pursuing a high quality position, has to be shown not only in the quality of the product, but in every aspect of the marketing mix such as the price, distribution channels, advertising and after sales service.

## **2.15 Positioning and the Marketing Mix**

At the marketing level strategy, positioning by segment is the basis upon which the marketing mix is crafted (Day and Wensley 1990, p.388). Thus, product positioning offers guidelines as to how to price and development of the advertising, promotion and distribution strategy. They offer an example where an elitist positioning status requires an equivalent product design, packaging, price and an upscale distribution reflective of the sought position.

Wiese (2008, p.89) states that due to the intangibility of education, the core services offered by universities and other tertiary institutions need to craft a marketing strategy that is precisely communicated by all facets of the institution. The author further states that an appropriate mix will aid a university to serve its consumers on the most important needs and claims that it is the marketing mix in education that is the most crucial attribute in determining marketing success.

Perreault *et al.* (2008, p.75) state that the marketing mix provides existing and potential consumers with superior value through differentiation which builds a competitive advantage which allows consumers to regard the organisations offering in the market as uniquely suited to their preferences and needs.

Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.138) state that when marketers position a product, a specific marketing mix is created so as to influence the perceptions of potential consumers about the firm, the product and the brand.



It is of the view of Rix (2004, p.135), implementing a positioning strategy needs the consistent use of all elements of the marketing mix; price, distribution, promotion and the product must support the desired position. A positioning strategy that is not buttressed by elements of the marketing mix is unlikely to be accepted by the consumers in the targeted segment (Rix 2004, p.135). Rix (2004, p.135) offers the example to illustrate the need for the marketing mix to support positioning, that a designer suit would probably not appeal to purchasers of the brand if it were sold through a designer outlet and advertised on television as 'this week's special buy'.

Brennan, Baines and Garneau (2003, p.112) state that differences between consumers in different market segments can be attended to through the use of elements in the marketing mix. For example according to the authors Mercedes targets upscale consumers with expensive, well-engineered and prestigious vehicles and Daewoo targets price sensitive consumers with value for money vehicles.

Existing products may be changed in order to change its market position, for example, how Jeep was changed from a military vehicle to a family vehicle (Shostack 1987, p.34).

Literature by authors Lovelock (2007, p.192) and Shostack (1987, p.34) mention that several marketers relate positioning mostly to the communication element of the marketing mix. Shostack (1987, p.34) states that to some marketers positioning is a communications issue, the product or service is a given and the objective is to manipulate consumer perceptions for reality. This illustrates the extensive use of advertising in packaged goods marketing to develop images and associations for branded goods in order to offer them a special difference in the buyers mind (Lovelock 2007, p.192).

This ideology, according to Lovelock (2007, p.192), gives rise to unease with the function of positioning in guiding the creation of marketing mix strategy for services that compete on more than just imagery. This, to Lovelock (2007, p.192), means that advertising, personal selling and public relations have to guarantee that potential consumer's correctly perceive the positioning of the service in ways that are influential in making choice decisions.

However, positioning is more than just advertising and promotion. Market position can be affected by price, distribution and the product itself which is the core around which all positioning strategies revolve (Shostack 1987, p.34).

Kotler (1997, p.301) states that the elements of the marketing mix can be used to emphasise quality; for example, dear prices usually indicate the highest of quality and so too does packaging, distribution, advertising and promotion. Kotler (1997, p.301) offers examples where brand quality image was tarnished by incorrect use of the marketing mix elements:

- “A reputable frozen food brand lost its glitzy image by being on sale regularly
- A premium beer harmed its image when it switched from bottles to cans
- A highly respected television lost its quality image when high volume outlets began stocking it
- Kraft General Foods made use of lower quality beans in its ‘good to the last drop.’”

Kotler (1997, p.301) mentions that a manufacturer's reputation aids the view on quality, such as Nestle products which are perceived to be of high quality. The same author further proposes that clever organisations communicate their quality to buyers and guarantee that this quality will be consistently delivered or that customers will get their money back.

Authors Kotler (1997, p.301) and Payne (1993, p.118) propose the idea that upon an organisation developing a clearly understood positioning strategy, this strategy must be communicated effectively. Kotler (1997, p.301) offers an assumption that if, say, an organisation chooses the position of 'best quality' among many other bases of positioning, this position has to be communicated by selecting physical attributes that the consumers use to evaluate quality.

Kotler (1997, p.301) mentions a few examples:

- "A lawn-mower manufacturer claims its lawn mower is 'powerful' and uses a noisy motor because buyers think noisy lawn mowers are more powerful
- A truck manufacturer undercoats the chassis not because it needs undercoating but because undercoating suggests concern for quality.
- A car manufacturer makes cars with good slamming doors because many buyers slam the doors in the showroom to test how the car is built
- Ritz Carlton Hotels signal high quality in the way they handle phone calls. Employees are trained to answer within three rings, to answer with a genuine smile in their voices, to eliminate call transfers when possible and to be extremely knowledgeable about all hotel information".

Hooley *et al.* (2004, p.52) state that decisions on the marketing mix cannot be considered in isolation from the strategy being pursued.

"A premium positioning for example, differentiating the company's offerings from the competition in terms of high product quality could be destroyed through charging a low price. Similarly, for such a positioning to be achieved the product itself will have to deliver the quality claimed and the promotions used to communicate its quality. The distribution channels selected and the physical distribution systems used or created, must ensure that the

products or services get to the target customers” (Hooley *et al.* 2004, p.52).

Payne (1993, p.118) offers an example on how elements of the services marketing mix can be used to support the positioning of a service organisation:

- **Service Product:** the product itself offers considerable opportunity to deliver positioning, Barclays Connect card helps position the bank as innovative, the card fulfils a wide number of roles, cheque guarantee, cash withdrawal, Visa usage debited directly to the current cheque account and a deposit card. In the context of education according to Wiese (2008, p.90) the product would be the programmes on offer at the university.
- **Price:** retailers and hotel chains are examples of organisations with good understanding of the role of price associated with quality in positioning. According to Garden (2003, p.194) there is a perceived relationship between quality and price.
- **Service availability and location (place):** some banks are positioning themselves to be more accessible to the customer. This is achieved by the use of technology – making ATMs widely available as well as improved banking hours. According to Ivy (2008, p.290) place is the manner in which the university delivers education as a service to meet or exceed student expectations.
- **Promotion:** promotion and positioning are inextricably bound together as it is the advertising and promotional programmes which communicate positioning. Positioning themes or signatures such IBM’s ‘fast reliable service, every customer, every day, every time’ can help reinforce the desired positioning. Promotion is inclusive of all the tools that universities may use to provide its target market with information on its offerings; this would include advertising, publicity, public relations and sales promotional efforts (Ivy 2008, p.290).

- **People:** people are essential to delivery of positioning. According to Ivy (2008, p.290) in the university context, people as a marketing mix element are related to all the academic, administrative and support staff that interact with potential and current students. For Avis to deliver the 'we try harder' positioning, they had to ensure that every employee was actually trying harder to serve the customer or was supporting someone who was serving the customer.
- **Processes:** processes are essential to delivering the position. According to Ivy (2008, p.290) "processes are all the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the university". This entails such functions as handling registration enquiries, course evaluations, examinations and graduation ceremonies (Ivy 2008, p.290). If large queues develop in a bank or supermarket or an ATM network ceases to function, no amount of communication or well intentioned people will overcome the breakdown.
- **Customer Service:** customer service influences customers' perceptions greatly. It can thus be used as a weapon to create competitive advantage that is not easily copied. This represents an important means of creating differentiation in the company's positioning strategy.
- **Physical evidence:** According to Ivy (2008, p.290), physical evidence consists of tangible elements that are evaluated by a university's target markets such as teaching materials, building appearance and lecture facilities.

Positioning thus guides the creation of the marketing mix since all the elements of the marketing mix can be utilised to influence the consumers' perceptions and hence the positioning of the organisation (Payne, 1993, p.119).

According to Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.101), the process of positioning plays a crucial role in achieving the desired place in the minds' of existing and probable consumers. Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.101) state that positioning is a continual process. Ferrel and

Hartline (2005, p.202) also propose the continual reassessment of the target market, the firm's position and the position of competing offerings to ensure that the marketing program stays on track and also to identify emerging positioning opportunities. Organisations face strong competition within the marketplace and ultimately marketers have to find a unique and defendable position for their goods and services against alternate choices. Organisations should target those segments which it can serve better than all competitors on attributes important to those chosen segments.

Hoyt and Brown (2003, p.4) cited in Wiese (2008, p.2) state that for educational institutions to remain viable and competitive they have to:

- “Establish a market position
- Identify Competition
- Determine the various needs of the various market segments
- Develop a marketing plan for promoting their educational services”.

## **2.16 Conclusion**

Due to the dynamic environment within which tertiary institutions operate, universities need to take on a strong marketing concept through stronger consumer focus and integrating all marketing functions (Wiese 2008, p.121). Based on its particular envisaged position, the university has to integrate its marketing mix elements to attain this. Accordingly, the existing environment of UKZN is presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 3. The UKZN in the South African Higher Education Sector**

This chapter starts with a discussion of the stakeholders in the Higher Education sector with the purpose of identifying the attributes these stakeholders find important in a university.

The chapter presents the UKZN and its positioning strategy and offers a brief insight into Gauteng business as a stakeholder of the UKZN. The role of these stakeholders is briefly outlined. The history of the UKZN is provided and its stakeholders, its position, marketing mix and past research on the positioning of the UKZN are described. This chapter has an important function in the study as it seeks to give insight to the UKZN and its stakeholders who ultimately provide the attributes upon which the university can position itself.

### **Introduction**

The UKZN as a university is part of the South African higher education sector and this sector has several stakeholders who impact on the accorded position of the UKZN. The perceptions and needs of these stakeholders determine the accorded position of the UKZN.

### **3.1 Stakeholders in Higher Education**

According to The Presidency (2001, p.19) higher education has several related purposes namely:

“It provides the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy. It teaches and trains people to fulfill specialised social functions, enter the learned professions, or pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry and the arts”.

Naude and Ivy (1999, p.126) state that in order for organisations to remain dominant and viable in the long term there is a need to recognise the independence of their consumers. They state that “students are raw materials, graduates the product and prospective employers the customer”(p.127). Thus all these constitute stakeholders. According to Wiese (2008, p.86), universities, as non-profit organisations, serve multiple groups or publics who may be individuals, trusts, companies, students, parents, government or employers who need to be satisfied.

According to Mashhadi, Mohajeri and Nayeri (2008, p.338) the global village we presently reside in is characterised by rapid change, vast flows of information and increasing competition. Higher education institutions are emerging as organisations driven by market forces hence today’s higher education institutions acquire a significant portion of funding from external sources and the private sector rather than the public sector. Wiese, Van Heerden and Jordaan (2009, p.40) state that higher education is going through immense change, including the formation of partnerships. The challenge of multiple stakeholders. according to McClung and Werner (2008, p.104) requires an integrated approach to teaching and research that enhances intellectual and practical goals.

The government both at national and provincial level, is an important stakeholder in the South African Higher Education Sector. South African students are stakeholders as they are the majority who experience the education service within this country. According to McClung and Werner (2008, p.102), universities the world over are facing a confidence crisis as various stakeholders are questioning the value offered by these institutions of higher learning. Every university has acknowledged the need to satisfy several stakeholders if it is to survive and thrive in the education sector (McClung and Werner 2008, p.102). According to McClung and Werner (2008, p.104) in order for universities to thrive they must identify viable segments of the population to serve efficiently since universities face the unenviable task of trying to increase student numbers from a declining pool of potential students.



### **3.1.1. Government**

The government, through its various departments, creates a legal framework within which the tertiary institutions operate. It steers education policy such as the desire to have more engineers within the economy and provide various forms of funding (UKZN International 2005, p.6).

The national Department of Education is responsible for education across South Africa. The national Department of Education seeks to transform the education and training policies of government and constitutional provisions into a national educational policy and to provide a legal framework within which this can be conducted (About SA 2009, paragraph.5). The national Department of Education's role is to offer research and policy review, planning and policy development, provide support to provinces and higher education institutions in their execution of national policy and monitor the execution of national policy (About SA 2009, paragraph.8).

Each of the nine provinces in South Africa has a department of Education which is also responsible for higher education in South Africa. The provincial institutions enjoy a greater level of autonomy in the execution of policies (Department of Education 2009, paragraph.5). The qualifications framework acknowledges three levels of education namely: general education and training, further education and training and higher education and training (Department of Education 2009, paragraph.6).

According to Essack, Barnes, Jackson, Majozi, McInerney, Mtshali, Naidoo, Oosthuizen, and Suleman. (2009, p.2), the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) suggested that funding be a lever to prompt equitable student access, quality teaching and research, greater student retention and throughput and the production of graduates that are responsive to the socioeconomic needs of South Africa.

### 3.1.2 Universities

SA Info (2009, paragraph 1), provides details of the 23 public higher education institutions which are at the forefront of academia on the African continent. These institutions were restructured so as to offer multiple choices for research and study for both local and international students. The restructuring created what is referred to as ‘comprehensive universities’ which is a new format of institution which sought to cater for universities that merged with what was formerly known as ‘technikons’ (paragraph 3).

Several other institutions also operate in the South African Higher Education Sector. They may compete for students or seek to collaborate with South African institutions. The UKZN for example, has more than 250 linkages with institutions outside South Africa (College Prospectus 2008, p.7).

Arpan, Raney and Zivnuska (2003, p.99) revealed in their study that universities regarded the size of the institution, location, appearance, scope of offerings, excellence of faculty, extent of endowments, diversity of students, campus morale, athletic prowess, service to the community, institutional visibility and prestige as being of importance in university selection.

Choudhry, Bennet and Savani (2008, p.11) conducted an investigation into what constitutes a university brand in the view of 25 marketing and communications directors and managers of 25 British universities. From this study they ascertained what these managers and directors believed prospective students took into consideration when choosing to enrol at a university. The authors revealed the following as crucial to prospective students: ambience, location, physical attractiveness, association with London, safety and security, employability career prospects in general, vocational training, courses offered, diversity of the student body inclusiveness, ease of entry, level of difficulty of courses, community links and visual imagery (Choudhry *et al.* 2008, p.20).

### **3.1.3 Parents**

Parents are stakeholders in the Higher Education Sector through funding their offspring and offering assistance in fields of expertise whenever called upon, such as volunteering for their companies to be case studies for various forms of academic research.

An investigation by Arpan, Raney and Zivnуска's (2003, p.98) revealed that family members regarded the following qualities as important with regards to university enrolment, namely: existence of a party-school image (an institution that affords students an active social life whilst still offering high quality education), image of the Greek system (an institution that is reflective of Greek norms and values), existence of a family atmosphere, friendliness of students and extent of family related values on campus.

### **3.1.4 Students**

The pool of potential students pursuing tertiary level studies is declining (McClung and Werner 2008, p.104). The decision of which university to attend is made whilst still at high school. This entails that scholars are an important group for universities to understand. Garden (2003) conducted an investigation into the positioning of universities based on scholar perceptions. The attributes that were favoured by scholars according to Garden (2003, p.124), were highly qualified lecturers, academic standards and international recognition. International recognition according to Garden (2003, p.100) was ranked as the most important attribute to scholars.

Arpan *et al.* (2003, p.98) conducted an investigation into the attributes that determine student enrolment. The attributes identified were family connections, ranking of particular schools, colleges, departments or majors, overall educational quality, size of university and its classes and the emphasis on sport (Arpan *et al.* 2003, p.98).

Vaughn, Pitnik and Hansotia (1978, cited in Conard and Conard, 2008, p.70), state that, in their research to determine the attributes deemed most important when selecting a college, academic reputation ranked as the most important and reputation of business programme, quality of faculty and academic reputation of the university tied in at second. According to Conard and Conard (2008, p.71), if a tertiary institution has a good academic reputation, its graduates generally get employed in better jobs. Conard and Conard (2008, p.78) state that, the ability to obtain a successful career after studying is more important to the perception of academic reputation than the teaching expertise of the concerned institution.

Ivy (2001, p.276) states that as competitiveness for students increases and funding declines, tertiary institutions have begun to adopt aggressive marketing campaigns to portray images that are best suited to the public in the form of students, employers and funders. With this in mind the author conducted research to find the positions occupied by UK universities and South African Universities and Technikons (Ivy 2001). Ivy's (2001, p.277) findings revealed that universities perceived excellence which guides the choices of prospective students, scholars considering offers of employment and states awarding grants.

According to Wiese (2008, p.iii), in her research of choice factors of students and information sources considered by students in their first year at various South African universities, ten choice factors were identified as determinants when choosing a university namely: "quality of teaching, employment prospects, campus safety and security, academic facilities, international links, language policy, image of higher institution, flexible study mode and a wide choice of subjects/ courses".

Mavondo, Zaman and Abubakar (2000, p.788) in their research on the determinants of student satisfaction with their institution of study have identified the following as determinant attributes namely: "academic reputation, quality of teaching staff and career prospects from attending such an institution.

Conard and Conard (2008, p.69) state that the reputation of a university plays an integral part in the position that it is accorded by the various stakeholders. Maguire and Lay (1981, cited in Conard and Conard, 2008, p.70) revealed in their research that financial aid, parents preference, specific academic programmes, school size, campus location, athletic facilities and social activities were attributes of importance to newly accepted applicants of Boston College. According to these authors, past research has revealed that the most important attribute in the determination of which college to study at is that of academic reputation.

To summarise various researchers cited above identified academic reputation, quality staff, career prospects, academic facilities, international recognition, international partnerships, subject choice, flexibility in study, family connections, rankings of the universities, emphasis on sport and the size of the university as being key attributes sought by scholars or students.

### **3.1.5 Business**

Business, according to the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2007, paragraph.4), is a stakeholder as it has to ascertain its own interests in the future of South African universities. Business includes such crucial stakeholders such as research foundations and sponsors. These interests include whatever changes recommended by government leads to business obtaining large numbers of students with flexible, competitive international skills who are citizens that can sustain and further develop debate crucial for a fledgling democracy (Paragraph.6).

Chiweshe (2007) carried out an investigation into the positions of universities by members of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business. The attribute most important to business in Pietermaritzburg was that of facilities, followed by quality education, management, support and security (p.61).

There is a significant amount of research available pertaining to the student stakeholder group whilst there is relatively little on business as a stakeholder and thus this is the focus of this study. As mentioned in the introduction, given the fact that the University of KwaZulu-Natal seeks to be the “Premier University of African Scholarship” (UKZN, 2008), it is of utmost importance to determine the perceived position of the UKZN from the point of view of the Gauteng business sector. Because this is the commercial hub of Africa and South Africa, their perceptions are of notable value. This is due to the fact that as the largest consumer of UKZN graduates and a provider of funding for research, they would be a large stakeholder with regard to the university. The investigation undertaken in this study focuses on Gauteng, not only because this province is the economic hub of African business, but also because it can be seen as a microcosm of Africa which will provide a way of testing whether the UKZN is fulfilling its sought after position of “Premier University of African Scholarship”.

However, as the focus is on the UKZN’s position accorded by Gauteng business, this next section of the study will look at the UKZN’s history, stakeholders and positioning.

### **3.2 A Brief History of UKZN**

The University of KwaZulu-Natal website states that the former University of Durban-Westville was founded in the 1960s as the “University College for Indians on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay” and had a low student enrolment over that period of establishment due to what is termed the Congress Alliances’ policy towards shunning apartheid structures (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3). The student population, however, grew at a rapid rate and the college attained university status in 1971. In 1972, what had now become University of Durban-Westville moved to its new location in Westville and this campus was a key place for anti-apartheid struggles (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3). The University of Durban-Westville became a self-governing establishment in 1984 and allowed multi-racial student enrolment (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3).

The former University of Natal was founded in 1910 as the Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg and was given the permission to be an autonomous university in 1949 due to its

large enrolment numbers, wide selection of courses, achievements and possibilities for research (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3). By the time this autonomy was granted the Natal University College was a multi-campus institution after being expanded to Durban after the First World War (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3).

The Howard College building in Durban was opened in 1931. In 1946 the government permitted a Faculty of Agriculture in Pietermaritzburg and in 1947 a Medical school for African, Indian and Coloured students was opened in Durban (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3).

The former Universities of Natal and University of Durban-Westville were amongst the first groups of institutions in South Africa to merge in 2004 in compliance with the government's higher educational restructuring plans that were aimed at reducing the number of educational institutions in South Africa from 36 to 21 (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3). The mergers were as a result of wide consultation on the reform of the higher education sector that commenced in the early 1990s (UKZN 2007, paragraph 3).

### **3.3 UKZN Today**

The UKZN has a staff complement of 5813, consisting of 1169 contract workers, 3053 permanent workers and 1591 temporary workers (DMI 2010). According to DMI (2009) the UKZN has an enrolment of 38 721 students. According to DMI (2009) the UKZN has an enrolment of 38 721 students consisting of 22 684 females and 16 037 males. The racial composition of these students is 22 592 black African, 1013 coloured, 11 106 Indian and 3920 white students. In the official statistics, 90 were classified as "other", these being students who may not have specified their race or felt the criteria did not include their race.

“UKZN has a rich history of community engagement, spread across Colleges, Faculties, Teaching and Learning, Research and Community Outreach Centres. Our communities include professional and social groupings, non-government and community-based organisations, government, business and industry. Each initiative provides the basis for dynamic interfaces in which different forms of knowledge accumulation and dissemination can intersect with each other and hence provide the basis for new approaches to knowledge production and the advancement of African scholarship” (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.5).

This population is located across the UKZN’s five campuses. The UKZN seeks to be the ‘Premier University of African Scholarship’.

The UKZN has successfully built its reputation over the years. For example, it has provided South Africa with eminent persons in the corporate world such as the former CEO of the Durban Chamber of Commerce, Professor Bonke Dumisa, CEO’s of JSE listed firms such as Mr. Ivan Clark, CEO of Grindrod Unicorn Group Group, CEO of Aspen Pharmaceuticals, Mr. Stephen Saad and the chair of BHP Billiton South Africa, Professor Vincent Maphai (College Prospectus 2008, p.9).

The Global Studies Programme offered by the UKZN’s College of Humanities is considered to be amongst the top ten in the world (College of Humanities 2009, para.5). The UKZN’s School of Nursing is a designated World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Midwifery (College of Health Sciences 2009, para.8). In 2004 the UKZN was rated the second highest in terms of research output in South Africa (College of Health Sciences 2009).



According to the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science (2009, para.10) the University of KwaZulu-Natal has the widest number of agricultural disciplines at on South African institution. “The African Centre for Food Security is the only facility in the world offering trans-disciplinary and named degrees in the field of Food Security”(College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science 2009, para.12).

The sections which follow briefly report on the perceptions of UKZN stakeholders followed by a discussion of the positioning of the UKZN.

### **3.4 UKZN’s Stakeholders**

The study revealed that there was generally a positive perception of the UKZN and that it was perceived to be the top institution in South Africa (Chiweshe 2007, p.57). The UKZN was rated as having the second best quality of education and the second best management whilst the University of Cape Town (UCT) was rated as having the best management (p.63). In terms of quality education, Stellenbosch was rated the best, UP (University of Pretoria) was rated best in terms of the support attribute and Stellenbosch was viewed as the best in terms of security (p.62). The UKZN Corporate Affairs Department viewed research, quality education, facilities, staff quality and management as the important attributes for an institution to have (Chiweshe 2007, p.68).

Chetty (2006, p.159) carried out an investigation on the quality of service offered to students in the Science Access Programme. The investigation revealed that the students in this access programme where not satisfied by the service the UKZN offered to them. The students felt their most important needs were counselling advice and career advice ( p.iii).

Garden (2003) conducted an investigation into the positioning strategy of the UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus based on UKZN scholars' perceptions. This investigation revealed that, based on attributes identified by respondents, the University of Cape Town was perceived to be the top university, whilst the UKZN Pietermaritzburg was deemed an average university (Garden 2003). Overall scholar perceptions towards the UKZN were positive (Garden 2003).

Garden (2003, p.100) stated that the UKZN positioned itself as a reputable internationally recognised institution with specialised programmes and had a reputation of being one of the top universities. International recognition according to Garden (2003, p.100) is ranked as the most important attribute to students.

The other attributes that were favoured by scholars according to Garden (2003, p.124), were highly qualified lecturers, academic standards and international recognition. The UKZN was positioned average in terms of how it fares on these attributes according to Garden (2003, p.131). Of the local institutions UCT took top place on these attributes.

Facilities which was the attribute selected as being the most important by business in Pietermaritzburg, the UKZN was rated as the best (Chiweshe 2007, p.62). Wessels and Jacobsz (2008, p.2) state that for the higher education sector to achieve acceptable standards of competitiveness and to guarantee relevance, institutions must stay abreast and adjust curricula to the ever changing employer market requirements.

### **3.5 Gauteng as a UKZN Stakeholder**

The study focuses on Gauteng as not only because it is the largest consumer of graduates by virtue of employing the largest number of people in South Africa, but also it is the economic hub of Africa whose value as a stakeholder is immense.

The South African Yearbook (2004, para.2) states that as a province, Gauteng contributes 25% of Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 9% of the African Continent's GDP. This signifies the importance of Gauteng as a stakeholder to the UKZN.

The South African Yearbook (2004, para.25) states that Gauteng is home to South Africa's most important educational centres. It further states that more than 60% of South Africa's research and development takes place in the Gauteng province. The Gauteng province also boasts the largest residential university in South Africa, the University of Pretoria, and what is believed to be the world's largest correspondence university, the University of South Africa (South African Yearbook, 2004, para.25). Such an environment provides strong competition to the UKZN.

Gauteng is home to Africa's largest securities exchange, namely the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) (SA Info 2008, para.13). It is the economic hub and financial centre of South Africa, 37% of South Africa's GDP is generated in this province (PPT 2004, para.4). Johannesburg is the gold capital of the world (PPT 2004, para.4).

"Gauteng's has a greater proportion of its labour force in professional, technical, managerial and executive positions than any other region in the country"(PPT 2004, para.10). This suggests that the workforce is more likely to comprise of graduates with degrees. Gauteng also has the highest per capita income in South Africa. (PPT 2004, para.10). According to Stats SA (2009, p.8),

Gauteng has over 4 million workers, more than any other province in South Africa and nearly double that of the next highest number of employed people in a province which is in KwaZulu-Natal, at close to two and half million workers.

Gauteng is also home to Africa's busiest airport, O.R. Tambo International (Business Guidebook, 2007, p.55). Gauteng contributes to firms desiring to set up shop as it is ably supported by sound technology, transport and telecommunications (Business Guidebook, 2007, p.55).

With the UKZN aiming to be ranked as the top African institution by 2016 (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.27), the successful collaboration with communities in areas where knowledge transfer can occur will contribute to achieving the desired result.

### **3.6 Positioning of the UKZN**

The UKZN seeks to position itself as "The Premier University of African Scholarship". This according to the UKZN Strategic Plan (2007, p.3) is:

"To be African is not to be separate from or outside the world but to play an integral and constitutive part without which the world and especially the world of scholarship, remains incomplete and impoverished. Scholarship does not designate a thing or product and is not to be confused with knowledge. The term scholarship reflects a special quality or way of being in relation to knowledge. Scholarship encapsulates a process of engagement with knowledge, its production, application and dissemination and African distinguishes that process of engagement".

The above statement reflects the UKZN mission to be a South African university that excels in fields of research and actively engages the society within which it operates from (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.4).

“It is important that UKZN is embedded in its local context and from that perspective enters the international and global arena. This will allow the University to engage with the global knowledge system on its own terms, bringing knowledge production processes relating to the local context into that global system and thus defining African scholarship. The generation of such knowledge will place the UKZN in a unique position and allow it to seek its legitimacy locally and globally, thereby making it a truly global institution (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007)”.

The UKZN regards research, facilities, committed academics, community engagement, internationalisation, African scholarship and being an employer and university of choice for students and staff as important attributes for a university to have (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.7). From the perspective of past research, the UKZN has not achieved the sought after position since it was not viewed as the top university in terms of quality education. Positioning literature suggests that positioning should be based on attributes that the consumer regards as important (Hooley 1995, p.422). At present the UKZN is not positioned on what consumers regard as being the most important attributes.

In terms of UKZN being the institution of choice for both students and staff, the UKZN is not attaining its sought position since according to research done by Garden (2003), UCT was perceived to be the top institution. For the Pietermaritzburg business community, according to Chiweshe (2007), the UKZN was attaining the sought after position since they rated the UKZN as the best institution in South Africa. The difference can be attributed to the fact that the attributes that the scholars regarded as being important for a university to have were different to what Pietermaritzburg business regarded as being important with the exception of Internationalisation. This would entail a different positioning.

Wiese (2008, p.ii) states that the higher education system in South Africa is experiencing several challenges, these challenges include a decline in state funding, mergers and student unrest which force tertiary institutions to adopt strategies that increase funding.

According to Wiese (2008, p.89), universities require a well developed and comprehensive marketing mix that is communicated throughout the university. With this in mind, the UKZN's current marketing mix is presented.

### **3.7 UKZN's Marketing Mix**

This section describes UKZN's mix and argues that this is important since an organisation's position is created through all elements of the mix. The UKZN offers education which is a service, hence the use of the 7P's dedicated to service's marketing. The coordination of the elements of the marketing mix enables a service provider such as the UKZN to satisfy its stakeholders and provide value to them (Wiese 2008, p.89).

#### **3.7.1 Product**

The core product offered by the UKZN is that of education. The UKZN Strategic Plan (2007, p.12) states that in offering education, the UKZN seeks to re-design curricula to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge and knowledge systems, promote internationalisation and forge strategic partnerships. According to the positioning literature reviewed in the previous chapter, the educational product on offer in terms of curriculum content should be determined by what is important to the consumers, such as students, parents and business.

### **3.7.2 Process**

The perceptions created by the service delivery process, impacts the perceived position. With regards to the UKZN, processes could include all the administrative functions of the university such as application enquiries, application process, how exams are conducted and supervision of post graduate students.

### **3.7.3 Price**

The UKZN offers an affordable learning environment through financial aid and bursaries from the corporate world. The UKZN also offers free tuition for certain postgraduate studies.

### **3.7.4 Place**

The UKZN's Strategic Plan (2007, p.8) states that the UKZN is located in KwaZulu-Natal in the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

### **3.7.5 Promotion**

In relation to the UKZN's website the homepage prominently features leading achievements by UKZN staff and scholars. The unique selling proposition could be the groundbreaking research such as the HIV/AIDS gel. The researcher has seen UKZN adverts in local, regional and international press.

### **3.7.6 People**

The UKZN has a staff complement of 8024, consisting of 1763 contract workers, 3080 permanent workers and 3181 temporary workers (Division of Management Information(DMI 2009b)).

### **3.7.7 Physical Evidence**

“The UKZN seeks to provide excellent learning facilities, that are accessible, which develop intellectual engagement and provide a learning environment conducive to student development that respects a diverse range of educational experiences and needs” (UKZN Strategic Plan 2007, p.21).

### **Conclusion**

The importance of stakeholders cannot be understated in obtaining the sought position. The current position can be used to reposition or strengthen the already existing position. The sought position will then be communicated through the marketing mix. The chapter which follows deals with the methodology used to achieve the objectives of this study.



## **Chapter 4. Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The research methodology presented in this chapter seeks to provide a framework upon which the accorded position of UKZN can be measured. This chapter describes how the research was conducted to achieve the objectives. The significance of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, pilot testing, research design and limitations are discussed.

### **4.1 Problem Statement**

Previous positioning studies for the UKZN have looked at the present students, scholars (potential students) and Pietermaritzburg business. Gauteng business, as was argued, being a major stakeholder, also needs to be researched. Thus the purpose of the research is to obtain the position accorded to the UKZN by an important stakeholder, namely as Gauteng business.

### **4.2 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study were:

1. To identify the soughtafter position of the UKZN according to the university's Corporate and Public Affairs Department.
2. To obtain the position accorded to the UKZN by business located in Gauteng.
3. To obtain perceptions of the UKZN relative to its competitors, from the Gauteng business community.
4. To identify any differences in perceptions between the UKZN and the Gauteng business community in terms of the UKZN's position.

### 4.3 Research Design and Methodology

The research was exploratory in nature and greater emphasis was placed on qualitative data to determine the attributes sought and positions occupied by different universities in the competitive set. Whilst quantitative data was collected this was exploratory in nature and the intention is not to generalise. According to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2005, p.132), exploratory research is a research method that relates to new fields of research. Therefore a researcher has to do an exploration just to learn something about the management dilemma (Blumberg *et al.* 2005, p.132).

An interview was conducted with the individual in charge of the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department. Initially, face to face interviews were planned with Human Resources managers of the firms with the largest market capitalisation on the JSE (Johannesburg Stock Exchange). However, the managers suggested electronic communication as the most ideal method of inquiry and thus interview questions were e-mailed to participants.

According to Jack and Raturi (2006, p.345), triangulation combines several research methods to study the same phenomenon on the premise that weaknesses in one method are counterbalanced against the strengths in the other. Jack and Raturi (2006, p.345) and Modell (2005, p.233) state that through triangulation errors introduced in research have less impact on biasing of findings. Bryman (2006, p.97) states that research that involves the integration of quantitative and qualitative research has become increasingly common. The author also states that triangulation can be referred to as greater validity where qualitative and quantitative data can be combined to triangulate findings in order that they may be mutually corroborated (Bryman 2006, p.97). The author further states that the key motivation with regards to triangulation is that it enhances the validity of research findings. In the context of this exploratory study, triangulation was achieved through integrating the findings of the interview with the Public and Corporate Affairs Department and the questionnaire sent to Gauteng business. Both these instruments had a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

#### **4.4 Sampling Technique**

The sample frame consisted of the top 164 firms by market capitalisation listed on the JSE. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) according to the JSE Corporate Brochure (2008), The JSE is one of the top 20 exchanges in the world in terms of market capitalisation. The JSE Corporate Brochure (2008) states that the JSE is the market of choice for both domestic and international investors who desire to enter the South African market and the greater African markets. According to the JSE Corporate Brochure (2008), the JSE has worldwide recognition. Thus the JSE listing of companies provides a representative sample of big business in Gauteng. The brochure further states that the JSE has a high level of integrity. The JSE Corporate Brochure (2009, p.4) states that the JSE is positioned to be a dynamic force in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and a key player in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The top 164 firms by market capitalisation consisted of subsidiaries and their parent holding companies.

The sample was drawn from all companies listed in the JSE Stock Exchange Handbook of 2009 where each company that was on the JSE's All Share Index, JSE Top 40 index, the Indi 25, the Fini 15 and the Resi 20 was included. The JSE Stock Exchange Handbook being a credible source of information on JSE listed firms offered a list of 164 companies by market capitalisation, hence the researcher chose this sample size. According to Forbes (2009, paragraph.1), market capitalisation is the total value of a companies outstanding shares in a unit currency. This, according to Forbes (2009, paragraph.1), determines a company's size which in terms of this investigation was crucial since large firms offer funding and employ a greater number of individuals and hence their determinant needs are crucial in positioning the UKZN.

Of the 164 top companies on the JSE list, one company withdrew from the JSE during the study, 26 companies expressed their desire not to be part of the research and 18 companies did not respond to the e-mail seeking permission to partake in the research. From the listed 164 companies, the final sample size was 119.

## **4.5 Instrument Design**

In order to compare the desired position of UKZN with that accorded by Gauteng business it was necessary to design two research instruments. Firstly an interview guide was developed so as to fulfil Objective 1, that of obtaining the sought position by UKZN. The responses would also be used to assist in contrasting and comparing the sought position of the UKZN and the accorded position from business in Gauteng, thus addressing being Objective 4 of this study. Secondly, a questionnaire was developed for the Gauteng Business sample. The instrument design was based on the instruments used in a positioning study of the UKZN by Chiweshe (2007), which looked at the accorded position of the UKZN versus the sought position as perceived by business in Pietermaritzburg. A similar set of questions was used in both the interview guide and questionnaire to facilitate comparison and to fulfil the objectives of this study.

### **4.5.1 Interview guide for interview with the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department** *(refer to Appendix 1)*

*Question 1: Which students does the UKZN seek to attain?*

This question was asked since, according to Ellson (2004, p.21), there is a greater need for more precise modification of goods or services and marketing effort to consumer or user requirements based on the acknowledgement that different products or services are generally consumed by different groups of people. In addition, targeting enables the marketer to determine what attributes are determinants for target markets which form the basis of positioning (Walker *et al.* 2008, p.157). This question was asked so as to ascertain in whose mind and whose needs the UKZN sought to position itself against competing alternatives. Understanding who the UKZN targets would contribute to understanding of the sought position.

*Question 2: Who are the UKZN'S competitors?*

This question was asked as, according to Du Plessis *et al.* (2001, p.110), the scrutiny of competitors within an industry is of importance since actions of competitors can affect an industry that presents itself as an attractive one. This question was asked so as to compare which institutions the UKZN sees as competitors with the institutions that the Gauteng business community regard as the 'main' universities.

*Question 3: What is the UKZN'S competitive advantage?*

This question was asked because, according to Hooley (1995, p.420), positioning can be explained in terms of the differential advantage or uniqueness of the offering. Keller (2008, p.107) further elaborates that points of difference are attributes or benefits that consumers associate a brand with, rate positively and perceive that they cannot find the same in any competing alternative. This is similar to the unique selling proposition. This question was asked as competitive advantage can be used as a basis for positioning. What the UKZN considers as a competitive advantage could be compared to what the Gauteng business community perceive UKZN's competitive advantage to be.

*Question 4: What 5 qualities do you feel make a good university? Please rank them, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent*

This question was asked as Johansson (1985, p.58) states that the starting point of positioning strategy is the idea that an evoked set of products can be described as different bundles of attributes which are capable of generating a stream of benefits to the buyer and user. This question would offer the attributes regarded as important to have by the UKZN and would be compared with those which Gauteng businesses regard as important.

*Question 5: Please also rate how the UKZN and its competitors from Question 1 perform on these qualities, with 1 being poor performance and 5 being excellent performance.*

This question was asked as, since according to Walker *et al.* (2006, p. 160), an important attribute may not always significantly influence a consumer's preference if all the competing brands, in this case universities, are viewed as being equal on this attribute. According to Keller (2008, p.98), settling for a position requires the determination of a frame of reference through the identification of a target market and the nature of the competition, the ideal points of parity and points of difference and brand association. This essentially means there is need to know who the target markets are, who the main competitors are, how the brand is similar to these competitors and where the brand differs with competitor brands. This question also seeks to fulfil the objective regarding any difference in perceptions with regards to UKZN positioning.

*Question 6: For matters regarding Public Relations, does the UKZN have policies for each campus or just UKZN as a whole?*

This question was posed as, since according to Palmer (2001, p.176), an integral part in the development of a market position is the creation of a unified image that consistently and precisely supports the chosen market position. This message has to be consistently communicated across campuses to the various stakeholders. Morin (2006, p.8) defines corporate level positioning as “a disciplined effort undertaken by an organisation to define how it wants to be perceived by its most important audiences. It results in an honest statement distinguishing characteristics and unifying attributes”. This question was posed to determine if there is a UKZN corporate position despite the fact that the UKZN has a multi-campus system.

*Question 7: Where does the UKZN position itself in the tertiary studies market and what is its unique selling point and how does it communicate it?*

This question was asked as Hooley (1995, p. 421) states that “effective positions not only convey a clear image to the consumer but also offer clear reasons for buying what the company has to offer”. Well executed brand positioning aids marketing strategy by giving clarity to what the brand is all about, its uniqueness relative to competing alternatives and why consumers should purchase it (Keller, 2008, p.98). Doyle (1983, cited in Brooksbank, 1994, p.10) defines positioning strategy as “the choice of target market segment which describes the customers a business will seek to serve and the choice of differential advantage which defines how it will compete with rivals in the segment”. This question was asked because the unique selling proposition offers differentiation for purposes of positioning and this difference has to be communicated to the various stakeholders.

*Question 8: In your opinion, has the positioning strategy of the UKZN achieved the position it seeks in the market for tertiary students?*

This question was asked as the objective of planned positioning, according to Payne (1993, p.101), is to make a delineation in a consumer’s mind which differentiates the organisation’s service from those offered by competitors. The creation of a position of value is of paramount importance to the service or good. Payne suggests that the position should be based on identifiable qualities or qualities important to the consumer; this means that there is no such item as a ‘commodity or standard service’ and every service has the capacity to be viewed as unique by a consumer. This question was asked so as to determine whether in the mind of the UKZN, they had attained their sought position.

*Question 9: In your opinion, how has the Gauteng business community, as a stakeholder, received UKZN's unique selling point?*

Walker *et al.* (2008, p.166) emphasise that it is generally desirable for there to be one element upon which the offering is differentiated from others and at most two, whether physical or perceptual. According to Kotler *et al.* (2008, p.235) “the result of positioning is the creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a cogent reason why the target market should buy the product”. This question was asked since theory stipulates that a well positioned offering should benefit from the target segment's purchase.

*Question 10: In your opinion, what five words best describe the UKZN?*

This question sought to gather the perception of the UKZN by the Public and Corporate Affairs Department of the UKZN. This could be contrasted with the perceptions held by the Gauteng business as a key stakeholder.

#### **4.5.2 Questionnaire for Gauteng Business** (*refer to Appendix 2*)

*Question 1: What, in your opinion, are the top 5 universities in South Africa?*

Lovelock (1984, p.136) states that through finding and analysing direct and generic competitors, a marketer can gain knowledge of strengths and weaknesses which ultimately offer opportunities for differentiation and become a basis for positioning. A key element with regards to this question is that the organisations are likely to employ graduates from these universities as these universities in the mind of the customer, in this case Gauteng business, would be best positioned. This question was asked so as to offer comparison with whom the UKZN's Public and Corporate affairs regarded as competition to the UKZN.



*Question 2: In 3 words how would you describe them and what is their key strength?*

This question was asked since, according to Keller (2008, p.98) and Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.97), positioning means the identification and establishment of points of parity and points of difference to enable the ideal brand identity and image. The latter authors state further that an offering that has an identifiable identity and focus to a specific target segment's needs will ensure the purchase of the product on offer and will also offer larger margins through value addition. The response to this question would reveal what positions these institutions occupy, this being their perceived strength and their unique selling position.

*Question 3: What 5 qualities do you feel make a good university? Please rank them with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important. Please also rate how each university from Question 1 fares on these qualities with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.*

The benefits on which the positioning is built must be important to the target customers aimed at (Hooley 1995, p.422). Payne (1993, p.101) states that the difference should be of high value to a significantly large enough consumer base. This question was asked for two reasons. Firstly, it was to ascertain what possible attributes positioning could be based on these qualities were to obtain the relative position. Secondly, it was asked so as to determine how the UKZN was positioned on important attributes relative to its identified tertiary institution competitors. This would be compared with the sought position of the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department.

*Question 4: Does the organisation have a 'preferred' university from which to recruit employees? If so, which and why?*

This question was also asked as organisations that would have employed graduates of the UKZN may have a different perception to those organisations that do not.

*Question 5: Have you ever seen a UKZN advertisement? YES or NO*

Kotler (1997, p.301) states that upon an organisation developing a clear positioning strategy, this position should be communicated effectively. Hooley (1995, p.422) states that positions should be communicable. They should be capable of being communicated to the target market. This often means that they should be simple and uncomplicated, amenable to translation into attractive and creative advertising or other communication means (Hooley 1995, p.422). This question seeks to determine whether the UKZN is communicating its position to stakeholders such as Gauteng business.

*Question 6: If yes, what appealed to you most?*

Lovelock (1984, p.134) mentions that several marketers relate positioning mostly to the communication element of the marketing mix. This question determines what associations are attributed to the UKZN as a brand. This would also reveal what part of the advert resonated with the target market.

*Question 7: List 5 words that best describe the UKZN*

This question was asked because Lamb *et al.* 2004(cited in Klopper *et al.*2006, p.138) state that consumers think of products or services according to their perceptions about what these products or services are like, their benefits and their competitive position. These scholars propose that positioning is all about perceptions. This question enabled comparison between UKZN's perception and that of the Gauteng business community. The word descriptions aided the understanding of the position accorded to the UKZN.

*Question 8: What programme do you feel the University of KwaZulu-Natal is best at?*

Keller (2008, p.98) states that:

“Unique points of difference provide a competitive advantage and reason why consumers buy the brand, on the other hand some brand associations can be roughly as favourable as those of competing brands, so they function as points of parity in consumers’ minds and negate potential points of difference for competitors. In other words, these associations are designed to provide no reason why not for consumers to choose a brand”.

The answer to this question could be used as a basis for positioning the UKZN by business as it would offer a competitive advantage upon which to position.

The following questions were also asked as sample descriptors:

*What field of business is this company in?*

*How many people are employed in this organisation?*

*What is your position in the organisation?*

*What gender are you?*

*What race are you?*

*What is your highest level of education?*

*What institution is this from?*

From posing these questions the next step was to collect the data from the respondents.

## **4.6 Data Collection**

The 164 companies identified for investigation were first contacted for permission for the research to be conducted. Face-to-face interviews were to be used to collect the data, the companies that consented to be part of the research were of the opinion that electronic communication was best suited to their work schedules. Thus the questionnaire was emailed to the participants. Several measures were taken to ensure the highest possible response rate. Over a period of 2 months companies that had not responded to the request to participate in the research were sent weekly reminders seeking their participation. The companies that expressed the intention not to take part in the research were removed from the mailing list. After the 2 month period, the companies that had consented to be part of the research were sent questionnaires electronically.

The data obtained from the companies was collected over a 4 month period with reminders being sent to companies that had volunteered to participate but had not yet done so. The collected data was coded and captured into an SPSS spreadsheet.

With regards to the UKZN's Public and Corporate Affairs Department, a request for an interview was sent to the office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Corporate Relations, who, in turn, designated a senior official for the researcher to interview. The interview was recorded and notes taken.

## 4.7 Data Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79), “thematic analysis is the method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data”. Welman and Kruger (2005, p.221) state that content analysis is a “quantitative analysis of qualitative data” and that content analysis enables the identification of keywords and themes within a data set. In this investigation, themes were developed from the various ‘word’ descriptions respondents offered to describe universities and attributes that they regarded as important for a university to have.

According to Blumberg *et al.* (2005, p.600), the initial step in any data analysis is the editing of the raw data. The authors further state that editing reveals errors, omissions and corrects wherever possible and that editing insures the data is “accurate, consistent, uniformly entered, complete and arranged.”

According to Welman, Mitchell and Kruger (2005, p.200) and Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87, cited in Bishop 2008, p.40), coding entails the identification of the variable that requires statistical analysis and deciding the appropriate code values or words such variables are representative of. According to Blumberg *et al.* (2005, p.602), coding involves the assigning of numbers and symbols to the responses given by respondents so that they may be grouped into a limited number of cases or categories.

Given the aforementioned, the data was then coded as there were several descriptors given by the respondents. According to Blumberg *et al.* (2005, p.603), of particular importance when coding is that the category components be mutually exclusive, meaning that when a response is placed in a category it can be only in that category.

Content analysis was done as the data provided by the respondents offered various ‘words’ to describe the universities they had identified. The data was analysed with the using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and through triangulation. SPSS and triangulation was used to identify common themes, reliability, validity and provide graphical support to illustrate frequencies.

## **4.8 Validity**

According to Welman and Kruger (2003, p.136) construct validity measures whether the research instrument measures what it is supposed to measure, in this case the attributes deemed important and the perceptions which give rise to the perceived position. Triangulation was used to illustrate validity of the findings. Triangulation offers external and construct validity through corroboration of converging findings (Modell 2005, p.236). Jick (1979, p.602) states that “more than one method should be used in the validation process to ensure that the variance reflected is that of the trait and not of the method. The convergence or agreement between two methods enhances our belief that the results are valid”.

## **4.9 Reliability**

Reliability, according to Welman and Kruger (2003, p. 138), refers to the degree to which the obtained results can be generalised to different measuring occasions, measurement or test forms and measurement or test administrators. According to Blumberg *et al.*(2005, p.606), content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication”. Content analysis prevents the selective perception of content, offers thorough application of reliability and validity criteria and allows computerisation.

#### **4.10 Ethical Requirements**

An application was made to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethical Clearance Committee to obtain ethical clearance for this investigation. The application was granted and a copy of the Ethical Clearance is attached in the Appendix. A letter of informed consent (refer to Appendix 3) was attached on the front of each questionnaire, which notified the respondent of the purpose of the research, confidentiality and the fact that they could withdraw from the investigation at any point.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The process outlined in this chapter provided the data that fulfilled the objectives of the study and provided the findings described and discussed in the following chapters.

## **5. Chapter 5 Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the interview held with a senior representative of the Public and Corporate Affairs Department. The findings in this chapter fulfilled the objective of finding the sought position of the UKZN by the Public and Corporate Affairs Department of the UKZN. This chapter also presents the findings from the questionnaire sent to businesses in Gauteng. Descriptive statistics are presented for quantitative data and themes are presented as qualitative data.

### **5.2 UKZN Interview Findings**

#### ***5.2.1 UKZN's student target markets***

According to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department representative, the UKZN seeks to obtain students from all the provinces of South Africa, students from previously disadvantaged communities, the African continent and the international community. The representative further stated that there was a thrust towards insuring that at least 10% of the student population was made up of international students. In 2008 the UKZN enrolled the majority of the top 10 matriculants from the KwaZulu-Natal province.

#### ***5.2.2 UKZN's competitors***

The representative identified the so-called “Big 5” as competitors namely UCT(University of CapeTown), Stellenbosch (University of Stellenbosch), Wits (University of Witwatersrand) and UP (University of Pretoria). The UKZN was identified as the fifth member of the “Big 5” based on research output.



### ***5.2.3 UKZN's Competitive Advantage***

'Research thrust' was stated to be the UKZN competitive advantage. The UKZN, according to the Public and Corporate Affairs representative, was rated as the second best and most productive university in terms of research output in South Africa for the years 2007 and 2008.

The quality of the research was rated by external local and international bodies. The competitive advantage that the UKZN has in terms of research focuses on niche areas of research such as:

- HIV/AIDS in collaboration with international universities of high repute such as Harvard and MIT.
- Water sanitation.
- Food security where the UKZN has provided cutting edge research for the African continent's food security.
- The sustainability of rural livelihoods.
- Race and transformation based on the 2008 xenophobic attacks and transformation being a very topical issue in South Africa and peace studies.

The representative stated that the Howard Hughes Medical Institute funded research institute will place the UKZN as the leading centre in TB-HIV research in the world.

The representative continued to say that the UKZN was ranked in the top 1% of universities in the world in research areas such as Clinical Medicine, Plant and Animal Sciences, Social Sciences and Ecology. To support this competitive advantage the UKZN has internationally 'A' rated researchers and young researchers who reflect the demographic profile of South Africa. Research excellence, according to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department representative, will lead to excellence in teaching and learning.

#### ***5.2.4 Qualities of a good university***

According to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department representative, the 5 qualities that a good university should have in order of importance are research, teaching and learning in terms of facilities and committed academics, community engagement, internationalisation and African scholarship and being an institute of choice for both staff and students.

#### ***5.2.5 Performance of UKZN and competitors on the qualities of a good university***

According to the representative of the Public and Corporate Affairs Department, the UKZN was excellent in terms of research and community engagement, whilst it was rated above average in terms of teaching and learning, internationalisation and African scholarship and being the institution of choice for staff and students. The Public and Corporate Affairs representative rated UCT, Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Wits as excellent in research and internationalisation. The representative did not rate the other institutions on the other attributes as the representative was unaware of the internal operations of the other universities.

**Table 5.1 Competitor performance on qualities of a good university**

<b>University</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Internationalisation</b>
UCT	5	5
Stellenbosch	5	5
Pretoria	5	5
Wits	5	5

In relation to these qualities the representative from the Public and Corporate Affairs Department also stated that the UKZN is actively involved in 300 community-based programmes such as the ‘health train’ that provides medical services to the less fortunate and tutoring of Grade 12 learners in Maths and Science. The UKZN provides the highest number of black accountants which helps satisfy the needs of the South African economy. The quality of teaching and learning, according to the representative from the Public and Corporate Affairs Department, was recognised to be of importance as evidenced by the establishment of an executive portfolio of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning.

#### ***5.2.6 UKZN Public Relations Policies***

The representative stated that UKZN has a single Public and Corporate Affairs Department where all communication to the media and the corporate world is regulated. According to the representative, the Executive Director of the Public and Corporate Affairs assigns individuals who speak on behalf of the university and what releases will be given to the media and corporate world. This insures that there is only one university-wide communication with the external world. The representative did, however, mention that the various faculties have internal publications which are not subject to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department overview.

#### ***5.2.7 UKZN’s unique selling point and the communication of this unique selling point***

The UKZN positions itself as a research-based university. This is communicated through all the publications printed by the UKZN to the public and internally. The Public and Corporate Affairs Department has a Schools Liaison office which communicates this at open days and fairs. The UKZN, according to the representative, communicated its position through community papers such as *Isolezwe*, as well as adverts in editorials and prospectuses. The UKZN communicated its position to teachers, learners and parents, who are ultimately decision makers and influencers.

According to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department representative between 2005 and 2007, 10 144 articles about the UKZN were published and 2 341 stories were aired. The articles and stories consisted of both positive and negative portrayals of the UKZN.

### ***5.2.8 UKZN's Positioning Strategy***

According to the representative, the sought position had been attained to a greater extent. However, other variables have emerged to be important to decision makers such as competitor universities offering scholarships or bursaries to attract top scholars and the head hunting of top scholars.

### ***5.2.9 Gauteng business's perception of the UKZN's unique selling point***

The representative was not particularly certain how the unique selling point had been perceived by business in Gauteng. The representative mentioned the following:

- Large numbers of UKZN graduates were recruited over the period of 'The Law Professions Day'.
- The majority of black accountants are from the UKZN.
- In agribusiness the UKZN is normally the solitary provider of graduates into the market.
- The School of Music has produced music of international acclaim and even an Idols South Africa contestant.

To further ensure that the unique selling point was perceived, all UKZN publications are of corporate quality and emphasize the research aspect.

### ***5.2.10 Word description of the UKZN***

The words chosen to describe the UKZN were access, redress, research, quality and transformation.

## **5.3 Findings from Gauteng Business**

### **5.3.1. Introduction**

In this section of the chapter the empirical data obtained from the study is presented and analysed, based on the questions of the questionnaire of this exploratory study. This section of the chapter presents the realised sample against the sought sample giving the response rate, a profile of the sample of the respondents is offered. A detailed descriptive analysis of the data obtained follows.

Within this section of the chapter there is a greater emphasis on qualitative data as a result of the small realised sample size. The qualitative data was exploratory. The available quantitative data was combined with qualitative data to offer an indication of the relative differences in perceptions of stakeholders.

### **5.3.2. Response Rate**

Of the 119 questionnaires emailed to respondents, only 17 were returned despite numerous reminders and appeals amounting to an overall response rate of 14%.

### 5.3.3 Sample Profile

**Table 5.2 Respondents Field of Business and Position**

		Respondent Position			Total
		HR Director	Communications Executive	Administrator	
Field of Business	Manufacturing	2	0	0	2
	Mining	1	0	0	1
	Retail	4	0	0	4
	Media	1	0	0	1
	Financial Services	3	0	1	4
	Logistics	1	1	0	2
	Insurance	1	0	0	1
	Multiple Sectors	1	0	0	1
	Gambling	1	0	0	1
Total		15	1	1	17

Of the companies that disclosed their field of business were either in retail or in financial service. Most of the respondents were the Human Resources Directors of their respective firms.

**Table 5.3 Gender and Race Respondents**

		Race				Total
		Black	White	Indian	Coloured	
Gender	Male	4	2	0	0	6
	Female	5	4	1	1	11
Total		9	6	1	1	17

Most of these respondents were female and black.

**Table 5.4 Educational Level and Institution of Past Study of Respondents**

Most of respondents had at least a post graduate qualification in their respective fields of study.

		Education			Total
		Undergrad	postgrad	Diploma	
Institution	Wits	0	2	0	2
	Rhodes	0	2	0	2
	Unisa	1	1	0	2
	Ukzn	0	4	0	4
	Pretoria Technikon	0	0	1	1
	Uj	1	1	0	2
	Stellenbosch	0	1	0	1
	University of North West	1	0	0	1
	Institute of People Management	0	1	0	1
	McGill University	0	1	0	1
Total		3	13	1	17

In terms of the respondents' institutions of past study had obtained their qualifications from the UKZN.

### 5.3.4. Questionnaire Responses

#### 5.3.4.1 Top 5 Universities

Table 5.8 below depicts how respondents rated the top 5 universities in South Africa.

**Table 5.5 Top 5 Universities in South Africa**

University	Top University	2nd University	3rd University	4th University	5th University	Total
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	
Gibs	1	0	0	0	0	1
UCT	9	3	1	2	1	16
WITS	4	6	2	1	2	15
UP	1	0	7	3	3	14
Rhodes	0	3	1	1	4	9
Unisa	0	0	0	1	0	1
UKZN	0	0	1	3	1	5
UJ	1	1	3	2	0	7
Stellenbosch	1	4	2	4	2	13

Gibs: Gordon Institute of Business Science University of Pretoria

UCT: University of Cape Town

WITS: University of Witwatersrand

UP: University of Pretoria

Rhodes: Rhodes University

Unisa: University of South Africa

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal



UJ: University of Johannesburg

Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University

It is evident from Table 5.8 that 16 of the 17 respondents placed UCT as being amongst their top five universities. 15 of the respondents placed WITS as one of their top five universities and 14 respondents placed UP as one of the top five universities in South Africa. The presence of WITS and UP would be expected due to the fact the businesses the sampled were located in the Gauteng province where these two universities are located. The placing of UCT as one of the top 5 universities is significant as the institution does not benefit from any proximity based loyalty. UCT was listed by 53% of the respondents as being the top university.

The UKZN was placed as a top 5 university by only 5 respondents and mostly in the 4<sup>th</sup> position. All three respondents who placed the UKZN in 4<sup>th</sup> position had obtained qualifications from the UKZN.

UNISA and GIBS were removed from further analysis as they were only mentioned by one respondent each.

#### ***5.3.4.2 Words used to describe the university and the key strengths associated with them***

Respondents to the interview question were asked to offer words that best described their chosen universities and to also list a key strength for each. Word descriptions were offered by 14 respondents whilst 13 offered key strengths for the universities they regarded as being within the top 5 universities in South Africa. Since UCT, WITS and UP had been placed in the top 5 by more respondents, they therefore had more word descriptors.

**Table 5.6 Word descriptors and Key Strengths**

<b>University</b>	<b>Word Descriptions</b>	<b>Key Strengths</b>
<b>UCT</b>	Academic excellence; recognition of qualification; internationally competitive; business relevance; lifestyle; depth; distinguished; best university; academic centre of excellence; diverse; international reputation; excellent public perception; excellent quality education; outstanding teaching and research university; high academic standards; excellent all round institution.	Transformation credentials; science; high calibre of students; well known; alumni; market clout; medical sciences and business school; arts; innovative; equip people with lifelong skills; meets international benchmarking; academic; sport; location; heritage.
<b>WITS</b>	International reputation; internationally competitive; business relevance; established; prolific; best Gauteng university; studies or work relatedness; engaged university; globally competitive in teaching, research and learning; strong on research; location; satisfactory all round institution.	Best Known in South Africa; commerce; high calibre of students; political strength; reputation; context relevance; humanities; publications; knowledge sharing; well resourced and connected to business; sports; located in economic capital of South Africa.
<b>UP</b>	Research capability; business solutions; leadership; Afrikaans; low staff turnover;	Serious approach; good governance; context

	holistic education; location; excellent all round institution.	relevance; technical qualifications; engineering; promote excellence; location capital of South African heritage.
<b>RHODES</b>	Tranquil, yet cosmopolitan; campus life; fair academics; centre of research excellence; English; arts; low political interference; research and development.	IT; niche offerings that are well recognised; studies and work balance; journalism; fine arts; humanities; rich political heritage.
<b>UKZN</b>	Well known in KwaZulu-Natal; mixture of vocational programmes; redressing past imbalances; good business qualifications.	Reputation; accessible; critically engaged with society and demographically representative; strong on ethics as a centre of learning.
<b>STELLEN BOSCH</b>	Facilities; campus experience; interesting offerings; applied focus; local feel; Afrikaans; low political interference; quality education; strong scientifically and medically; good academia	Consumer science; unknown; produces strong thinkers; market clout; engineering; research; strong on research; academic; sports; heritage.
<b>UJ</b>	Strong business links; transformed; credible; well known; academic learning environment; location.	Entrepreneurship; managed change; all rounder; community partnerships.

Upon listing the various words and key strengths that were given by the respondents, themes were derived to represent these words since, according to Blumberg *et al.* (2005, p.606), content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication”. The following themes were selected to represent the word descriptors and key strengths:

- *Academic excellence* as a theme was inclusive of word descriptions such as distinguished; quality education; high academic standards; excellent quality education; academic centre of excellence; and key strengths such as sound academic base and continuous learning.
- *Research capability* was representative of descriptors such as research of highest quality; publications and sharing knowledge and research output.
- *International recognition* was representative of international reputation; recognition of qualification; internationally recognised; credibility nationally and internationally.
- *Staff quality* was a theme that catered for descriptors such as faculty; and good academia.
- *Business relevance* as a theme was inclusive of words such as understanding business environment; business relevant; business solutions; mixture of vocational programmes and work readiness of graduates.
- *Management and Leadership* was representative of word descriptions such as discipline; integrity; good governance and leadership.

- *University experience* included word descriptions and key strengths such as campus experience; lifestyle; campus life and cosmopolitan culture.
- *Diversity of student body* as a theme was representative of words and key strengths such as diversity and demographically representative.
- *Facilities* are a theme as given by respondents.
- *Transformation* as a theme was representative of words such as transformation credentials; redressing the disadvantages; inequities and imbalances of the past.
- *Strong regional reputation* was representative of themes such as well known in Pretoria and well known in KZN.
- *Niche specialities* was a theme that included words such as science; commerce; entrepreneurship; journalism and fine arts.

From the table on the following page it is evident that the UKZN was described by only 4 respondents and was described as a university that is relevant to business, transformed and that has a strong regional reputation.

**Table 5.7 Word Descriptors**

	UKZN Count	WITS Count	UCT Count	UP Count	Rhodes Count	Stellenbosch Count	UJ Count
Academic Excellence	0	0	6	2	0	1	1
Research Capability	0	1	1	1	2	0	0
International Recognition	0	7	7	1	1	1	3
Staff Quality	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Business Relevance	2	2	1	1	0	1	2
Management and Leadership	0	0	1	2	2	2	1
University Experience	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Diversity of Student Body	0	0	2	1	2	1	1
Facilities	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Transformation	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Strong Regional Reputation	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Niche Specialities	0	0	0	2	2	1	0
Total	4	12	19	11	11	9	9

Almost 60% (7) of the respondents described WITS as being internationally recognised, with two respondents describing WITS as being business relevant to Gauteng business.

UCT was described as having international recognition, followed by its academic excellence. Diversity of its student's body was mentioned by 2 respondents.

There were 11 respondents who described UP but there was little agreement in terms of descriptors. UP was described as having quality management and leadership, academic excellence and niche specialities such as Engineering.

Rhodes was also mentioned by 11 respondents who had little agreement in terms of the descriptors, with research capability, management and leadership, a diverse student body and

niche specialities, all being listed twice. Niche specialities mentioned included English, Fine Arts and Journalism.

Nine respondents had varied opinions as to word descriptors of Stellenbosch with no clear descriptor given. The descriptors given were quality management and leadership, academic excellence, international recognition, business relevance, university experience, diversity of student body, transformed and had niche specialities such as journalism and fine arts.

Three respondents described UJ as having international recognition and 2 described it as having relevance to business.

**Table 5.8 University Key Strengths**

	UKZN	WITS	UCT	UP	Rhodes	Stellenbosch	UJ
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Academic Excellence	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Research Capability	0	2	0	1	0	2	0
International Recognition	1	3	4	2	2	3	2
Staff Quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Relevance	0	2	2	1	1	1	1
Management and Leadership	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
University Experience	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diversity of Student Body	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Transformation	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Strong Regional Reputation	0	2	0	0	0	1	0
Niche Specialities	0	2	3	3	5	2	1
Total	3	13	11	10	8	10	5

The key strengths perceived by the respondents in Table 11 were coded into themes that are collectively representative. The themes given for the key strengths are the same as those for the word descriptions offered in the preceding section. Key strengths are supposed to provide points of difference from which competitive advantage can be attained by the universities for purposes

of positioning. As a result of the low response, there seems to be no clear competitive advantage offered by any of the identified universities. Rather there appears to be points of parity which negate potential differences between consumers.

Only 3 respondents listed key strengths for UKZN and these were all different. They were international recognition, quality management and leadership and its transformation.

There was limited agreement amongst the 13 respondents indicating key strengths for WITS. Key strengths were given as international recognition, research capability, business relevance, strong regional reputation and niche specialities.

UCT's key strengths were given as its international recognition, followed by its niche specialities for example in medical sciences and the business school and business relevance.

UP's key strengths were given as its niche specialities in Engineering for example, followed by quality management and leadership and international recognition.

Rhodes's key strength was given as its niche specialities. From the perspective of the respondents who offered key strengths for Rhodes, niche specialities were a 'point of difference' for Rhodes as the respondents used words such as journalism and fine arts. International recognition was also given as a key strength.

International recognition was given as Stellenbosch's key strength, followed by research capability and niche specialities such as consumer science and engineering.



UJ only had 5 key strengths, with international recognition as the only strength mentioned more than once.

#### ***5.4.3.3. Attributes and their importance to a good university***

This question was not well responded to which limited the quantitative data retrieved. This led to a greater emphasis on the qualitative data to offer an idea as to the differences that exist between the importance of attributes. The quantitative data will need validation in the future from a larger sample size.

There were several qualities offered by respondents as important to a university. These were put into themes.

- *Academic excellence* included qualities such as academic excellence, academic studies and academic content.
- The *research capability* theme represented qualities such as research capability, research material, research, continuous research and prolific research output.
- *International recognition* represented attributes such as international reputation, internationally recognised and international benchmarking.
- *Staff quality* included attributes of qualities such as quality of lecturing staff, phenomenal faculty and quality of lecturers.
- *Management quality* represented qualities such as good governance, integrity discipline and professionalism.
- *Business relevance* encapsulated qualities such as business understanding, relevance to industry and business relevance.
- *University experience* was a theme describing of qualities such as cosmopolitan culture, spirit and rich student experience.

- The *diversity of students* theme included qualities such as equity students and demographically representative.
- The *high calibre of students* theme represented the calibre of students studying at or produced by the university.
- The *facilities* theme represented the facilities possessed by the university.

**Table 5.9 Attribute Importance**

	N	Sum
Academic Excellence	7	34
Research Capability	8	30
Business Relevance	12	30
International Recognition	8	28
Management Quality	7	22
Staff Quality	5	20
High Calibre Students	4	14
Diversity of Students	5	14
Facilities	3	10
University Experience	5	9

The respondents rated the importance of the qualities they identified. A score of 5 was accorded for an attribute a respondent felt was most important for a university to have and 1 for the least important quality. The scores were summed up to find the attributes the respondents felt were the most important for a university. Attributes that were listed only once were not included. To illustrate, for academic excellence of the seven respondents, six gave a score of five and one respondent gave a score of 4 giving a total of 34. Although 12 respondents listed business relevance as an important attribute, generally this attribute was listed in fourth or fifth position that is scoring only a score of two or one.

In terms of the sum scores academic excellence was rated as being the most important quality for a university to have by business in Gauteng followed by business relevance, research capability, international recognition, staff quality and management.

#### ***5.4.3.4 Performance of Universities with respect to the important attributes***

The respondents rated their Top 5 universities on how they performed on the attributes they identified as being important, with a score of 5 indicating excellence and a score of one indicating poor. Mean scores of performance on these attributes are provided.

**Table 5.10 Performance on Academic Excellence attributes**

	N	Mean
UKZN	4	3.500
WITS	5	4.000
UP	4	4.375
Rhodes	3	4.667
Stellenbosch	4	3.875
UJ	1	2.000

Gauteng business, rated how each university fared on the qualities they had identified as being important for a university to have. From the scores a mean score was calculated to give an overall performance for each attribute for the identified universities. In terms of the academic excellence attribute, Gauteng business were of the opinion that Rhodes mostly performed the best with a mean score of 4.67, closely followed by UCT with a mean score of 4.6. UKZN was rated fifth in terms of academic excellence with a mean score of 3.5.

**Table 5.11 Performance on business relevance attribute**

	N	Mean
	Valid	Valid
UKZN	7	2.714
WITS	8	4.000
UCT	9	4.556
UP	4	3.650
Rhodes	5	4.000
Stellenbosch	6	3.333
UJ	2	3.500

UCT performed best on the business relevance attribute with a mean score of 4.5. Wits and Rhodes were the next best performers on the business relevance attribute.

**Table 5.12 University performance on research attribute**

	N	Mean	Sum
	Valid	Valid	
UKZN	5	2.800	14.0
WITS	6	4.333	26.0
UCT	6	4.500	27.0
UP	4	4.125	16.5
Rhodes	3	3.667	11.0
Stellenbosch	5	3.700	18.5
UJ	2	2.500	5.0

UCT performed best on the research attribute with a mean score of 4.5 followed by WITS and UP with mean scores of 4.3 and 4.1 respectively.

**Table 5.13 Performance on International Recognition attribute**

	N	Mean	Sum
	Valid	Valid	
UKZN	5	2.600	13.0
WITS	5	4.000	20.0
UCT	8	4.375	35.0
UP	6	3.167	19.0
Rhodes	6	3.833	23.0
Stellenbosch	7	3.714	26.0
UJ	4	2.750	11.0

UCT again performed best on the international recognition attribute with a mean score of 4.3. Wits followed closely with a mean score of 4.

**Table 5.14 Performance on Management Quality attribute**

	N	Mean	Sum
	Valid	Valid	
UKZN Management Quality	5	3.200	16.0
WITS Management Quality	4	4.500	18.0
UCT Management Quality	6	4.667	28.0
UP Management Quality	4	3.750	15.0
Rhodes Management Quality	3	4.333	13.0
Stellenbosch Management Quality	5	3.600	18.0
UJ Management Quality	0		

UCT fared best on the management quality attribute with a mean score of 4.6, closely followed by WITS with 4.5 and Rhodes with 4.3. UJ was not rated on its performance on the management quality attribute.

**Table 5.15 Performance on Staff Quality attribute**

	N	Mean	Sum
	Valid	Valid	
UKZN Staff Quality	3	2.667	8.0
WITS Staff Quality	4	4.000	16.0
UCT Staff Quality	4	4.500	18.0
UP Staff Quality	2	3.500	7.0
Rhodes Staff Quality	3	3.667	11.0
Stellenbosch Staff Quality	4	3.750	15.0
UJ Staff Quality	2	3.000	6.0

UCT fared best on the staff quality attribute with a mean score of 4.5 followed closely by WITS (4.0) and Stellenbosch (3.8).

From the findings it can be noted that, according to Gauteng business, UCT performed best on at least six of the most important attributes.

#### ***5.4.3.5 Preferred university for recruitment***

Of the 17 respondents, 11 had no preferred university for recruitment purposes. Table 5.16 presents the preferences of the 6 respondents.

**Table 5.16 Preferred University of Recruitment**

Respondents	Which preferred university
1	Wits
2	UCT
3	Uj
4	UCT
5	UCT
6	Wits

As can be seen from the table above, three of the six respondents regarded UCT as their preferred university for recruitment. UKZN did not appear amongst the respondents' choices.

**Table 5.17 Preferred University for recruitment cross tabulation**

The table below cross tabulated the respondents institution of past study and their preferred university for recruitment purposes. This was done to see how many respondents who went to a particular university actually preferred it as a university from which to recruit.

		Which preferred university?			Total
		UCT	Wits	Uj	
Institution	Ukzn	1	1	0	2
	Pretoria Technikon	1	0	0	1
	Uj	0	1	1	2
	Stellenbosch	1	0	0	1
Total		3	2	1	6

Of the six respondents, only 2 had studied at UKZN but neither of them named UKZN as their preferred university for recruitment. The small size of the sample hindered correlation analysis and the ability to draw conclusions. Further research would be needed to see whether UKZN alumni have a positive or negative perception of UKZN today.

#### ***5.4.3.6 Awareness of a UKZN advertisement***

The respondents were asked whether they had seen any UKZN adverts. Of the 16 respondents, 11 had not seen a UKZN advert. This meant that the UKZN had not been unable to communicate its position to these respondents although communication is an important element of the marketing mix required to create a position.



#### ***5.4.3.7 Appeal of a UKZN advertisement***

**Table 5.18 Appeal of a UKZN advert**

	Ukzn Advertisement
Yes	5

Five of the six respondents indicated that they had found something appealing in UKZN advertisements. They offered the following as what had appealed to them in UKZN adverts: attempt to be accessible, billboard, nothing out of the ordinary, graduation attire with an African theme hood and the tone and style of the copy was approachable.

#### ***5.4.3.8 Word descriptors of the UKZN***

This question was answered by 12 respondents. All the qualitative themes listed in Table 5.22 have been classified as either positive or negative with regards to word perceptions which Gauteng business felt best described the UKZN. The themes presented were each used once by the various respondents.

**Table 5.19 Perceptions of the UKZN**

<b>POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>	<b>NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>
Academic	Boring
Merged	Dull
Reputation	Negative publicity
Well known in KwaZulu-Natal	Colonial
Non - racial	Parochial
Ethical	Inaccessible
Emerging	Lack of exposure
Focus on research and development (2 respondents)	Internal issues
Integrity	Unsuccessful branding as UZKN
Progressive	Struggling brand
Transformed (3 respondents)	Unknown
Diversity	Compromised academic integrity
Accessible	Deteriorated
Holistic education	
Contributes to national objectives	
Mixture of vocational programmes	

Although the responses given by Gauteng business of the UKZN contained both positive and negative perceptions, there was however a greater number of positive perceptions, of the UKZN, leading the researcher to conclude that Gauteng business has in general a marginally positive perception of the UKZN.

#### ***5.4.3.9 Programmes UKZN is best at providing***

**Table 5.20 Programmes UKZN is best at providing**

	Programme Ukzn is Best At
	Count
Medical School	3
Commerce	1
Fashion Design	1
Access Programmes	1
Leadership Programme	1
HIV/AIDS RESEARCH	1
Total	9

Of the 9 who responded to this question, 3 were of the opinion that the UKZN is best at programmes offered at the Medical School. The researcher drew the conclusion that other than the Medical School the respondents either did not know what the UKZN was best at or did not feel the UKZN is good at anything as there was only one programme with more than one respondent.

#### ***5.4.3.10 UKZN graduate employment***

13 of the 16 companies that responded to this question had employed a UKZN graduate.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The findings from the interview with Gauteng business has lead to the identification of the UKZN's competitors, the perceptions of the identified universities, the qualities that Gauteng business require in a good university and how the institutions perform on these qualities. These findings compared with those of the Public and Corporate Affairs Department enable the discussion of the findings and the drawing of conclusions from these findings in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6 Discussion of Empirical Findings**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter using triangulation, the qualitative data and quantitative data obtained from the investigation are discussed on the objectives of the investigation.

### **6.2 Objective 1: To identify the sought after position of the UKZN from the Public and Corporate Affairs Department of the UKZN**

The UKZN as a merged institution sought to position itself as a research based university UCT, Stellenbosch, UP and Wits as part of the ‘Big Five’ who were named as UKZN’s competitors. The UKZN was included in the ‘Big Five’. The UKZN’s competitive advantage was given as having a strong research focus.

Although the UKZN positions itself on the basis of research and this is its competitive advantage, it was acknowledged that the other universities in the ‘Big Five’ are as good in the field of research. According to Keller (2008, p.98) when brand associations are as favourable as competing alternatives they become points of parity to the consumers ultimately negating the competitive advantage. This meant that the UKZN’s sought position did not offer a competitive advantage for the UKZN relative to the other universities.

In 2004 the UKZN was rated the second highest in terms of research output in South Africa (College of Health Sciences 2009). “The African Centre for Food Security is the only facility in the world offering trans-disciplinary and named degrees in the field of Food Security” (College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science 2009, para.12). The UKZN had been achieving its sought position of being a research based university.

The UKZN by virtue of being located in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa on the African continent makes it an ideal location for the advancement of African scholarship and the attaining of its sought position. The physical evidence supports the sought position since, according to the findings, several millions have been spent on the upgrading and the construction of new facilities that compare favourably with the world's best.

### **6.3 Objective 2: Actual position accorded to the UKZN**

Thus to achieve the above objective, Gauteng business respondents were asked to identify competitors of the UKZN, the attributes they regarded as important for a university to have and how each of the competitors fared on these important attributes.

#### **6.3.1 Identification of the Competitive set**

Positioning, according to Walker *et al.* (2006, p.154) is related to the space a brand occupies in a consumer's mind relative to their needs and competing alternatives. Due to the competitive nature of the tertiary education sector as a result of ever declining funding, Payne (1993, p.120) suggests that consumers can be confused with various offerings in the education sector.

Gauteng business identified GIBS, UCT, UJ, Stellenbosch, WITS and UP as competitors of the UKZN. Research by Chiweshe (2007) revealed that Pietermaritzburg business regarded UCT, WITS, Rhodes, UJ, UOFS (University of Free State), MEDUSNA (Medical University of South Africa), Stellenbosch, UNIZUL (University of Zululand), UNISA (University of South Africa) and Potsch (North West University) as competitors of the UKZN. Garden (2003) in her research on scholars found Stellenbosch, WITS and International institutions as competitors of the UKZN.

Naude and Ivy (1999, p.127) state that “students are raw materials, graduates the product and prospective employers the customer”. 5 of the 17 respondents that identified competitors of the UKZN placed the UKZN in their top 5 universities, whilst the rest of respondents did not accord the UKZN that position.

### **6.3.2 The identification of attributes**

*Academic excellence* has been found to be the most important attribute in positioning research in the Higher Education Sector. For example looking at students, Wiese (2008, p.iii) found the quality of teaching and Mayondo, Zaman and Abubakar (2000, p.788) found the academic reputation to be a determinant attributes. Garden (2003, p.125) in her research found that highly qualified lecturers and academic standards were the most important attributes. Pietermaritzburg business identified quality education to be the second most important attribute (Chiweshe 2007, p.60). These similarities reveal the importance various stakeholders’ accord *academic excellence* as a quality of a good university.

Gauteng business identified *business relevance* as one of the top attributes for a good university whereas, students made mention of related attributes such as employment factors (Wiese 2008, p.iii), employability (Choudhry, Bennet and Savani 2008, p.20) and career prospects (Mayondo *et al.* 2000, p.788).

*International recognition* was identified as an important attribute for a university to have by stakeholders such as Gauteng business. This finding concurs with other researchers such as Garden (2003, p.131) in her study focussing on scholars and Wiese (2008, p.iii), in her research on choice factors of students and information sources considered by students in their first year at various South African universities revealed international links as being important.

*Research* was identified as an important attribute by Gauteng business. However the other identified stakeholders from past research did not offer *research* or related attributes as being important for a university as these stakeholders may not have felt that *research* was an important quality for a university to have.

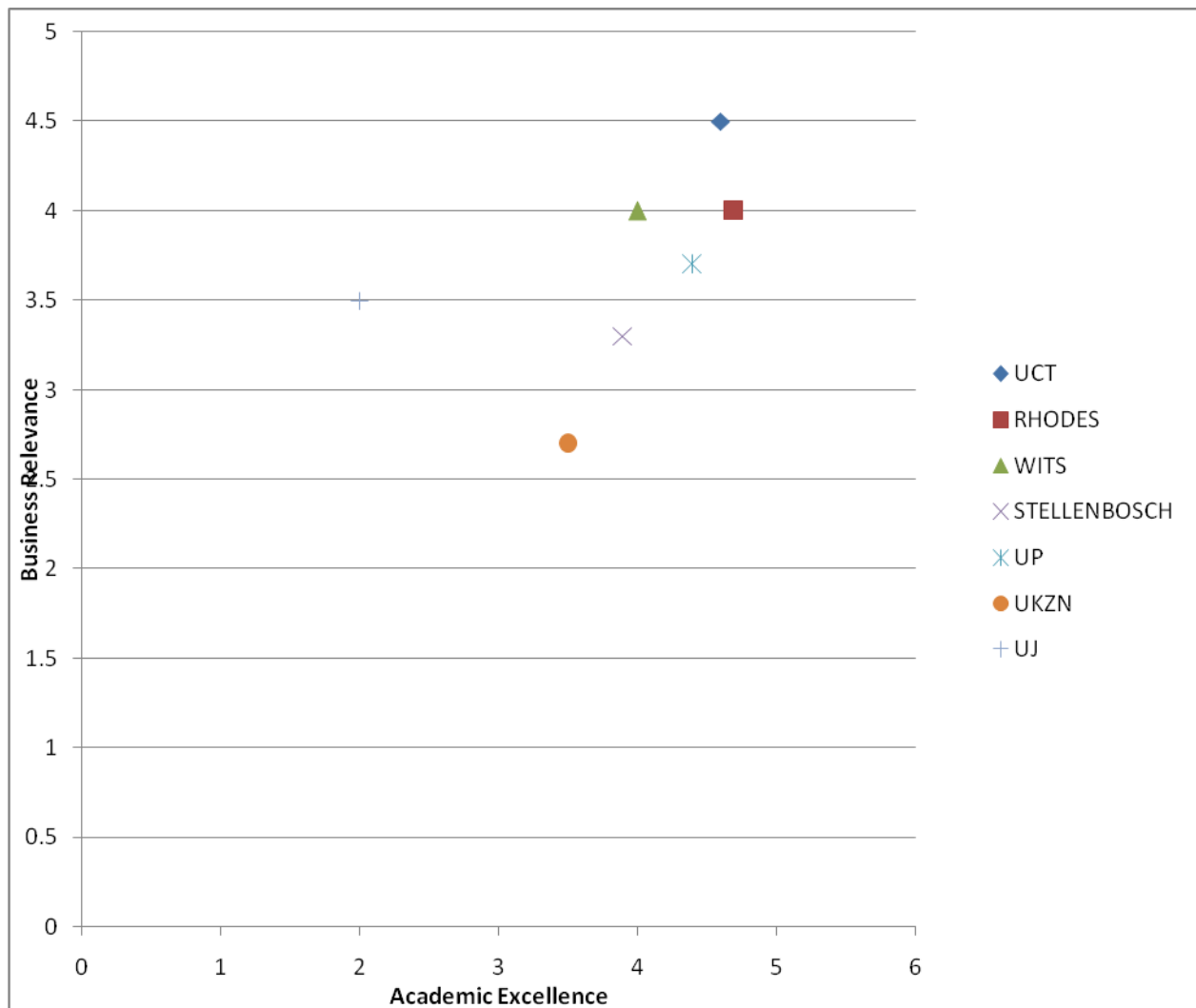
It can be concluded that the attributes identified as being important by the various stakeholder groupings were similar with what was revealed in the research.

### **6.3.3 Position of UKZN**

Positioning maps, according to Lovelock (2007, p.199), allow the identification of perception gaps and support or refute notions that a service or its parent organisation holds a unique niche in the marketplace. On the basis of what Gauteng business and other stakeholders identified as being important attributes for a university, the UKZN and competing universities were positioned on perceived performance on these important attributes (*academic excellence and business relevance; international recognition and research*) .

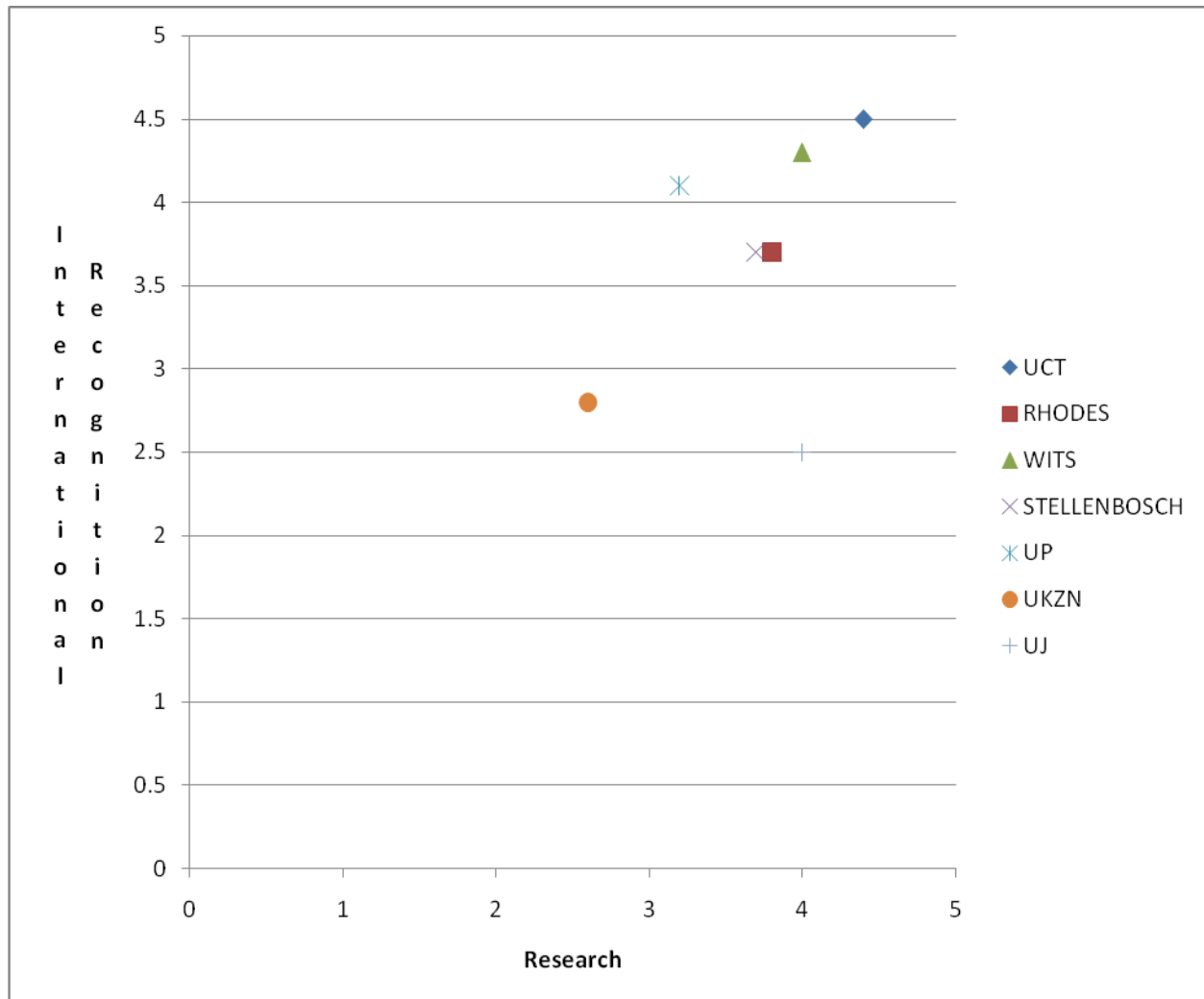


**Figure 6.1 Perceptual Map on important attributes**



The UKZN, according to Gauteng business, has an average performance on the *academic excellence* attribute and average *business relevance*. UCT was positioned as the best in terms of the these important attributes.

**Figure 6.2 Perceptual Map of International Recognition and Research Attributes**



UCT was positioned as being the best on the *research* and *international recognition* attributes. UCT was regarded as the top university in South Africa and it therefore follows that the respondents rate UCT as performing best on the attributes Gauteng business identified these attributes as being most important for a good university.

According to Klopper *et al.* (2006, p.139), consumers offer the top position to the organisation, product or brand that is the market leader and which is well known. These consumers compare competing alternatives to the market leaders offering (Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.139). The position accorded to the UKZN was as a result of Gauteng business using UCT and RHODES as a points of comparison on these important attributes.

When goods and services occupy distant positions on a map, this reflects that consumers perceive them very differently and those positions that are close to each other reflect perceived likeness, meaning that competition is likely to be very intense compared to those positions that are located distantly on the positioning map (Walker *et al.* 2006, p.161).

From the positioning maps 6.1 and 6.2 it can be seen that UCT was positioned within the highest scores as a leading university on attributes Gauteng business regarded as being important for a good university.

Every brand, as maintained by Kotler (1997, p.296) and Lovelock (2007, p.188) must select an attribute and sell itself as the best on this attribute. The objective of planned positioning, according to Payne (1993, p.101), is to make a delineation in a consumer's mind which differentiates the organisation's service from those offered by competitors. The creation of a position of value is of paramount importance to the service or good. For an organisation to maximise its potential it should position itself in its core market segments where it is impartially and personally distinguished in a beneficial manner over competing offerings (Payne 1993, p.120).

The UKZN according to Gauteng business was not accorded the position of a research-based university, UCT occupied this position. The actual position accorded to the UKZN is that of having above average *business relevance* and above average performance in terms of *academic excellence*. UCT and Rhodes are accorded the position of being the best in terms of facilities and academic excellence.

#### **6.4 Objective 3 Perceptions of the UKZN according to Gauteng business versus its competitors**

Payne (1993, p.102) suggests that it is of no benefit to an organisation attempting to refute consumers' perceptions of offerings since consumers accord each service a position in their minds and this persuades their buying decision. Positioning is all about perceptions (Lamb *et al.* cited in Klopper *et al.*, 2006, p.138).

The UKZN was described as catering for KwaZulu-Natal, having a research focus and transformed by both Gauteng and Pietermaritzburg business. The negative perceptions that both business communities shared with regards to the UKZN were it being an unknown university that had a negative public image and declining standards. Palmer (2001, p.185) states the intangibility of the product in services results in the credentials of the service provider to be an important selection criteria. Palmer (2001, p.185) states "the notion of an emotional relationship to a product has been extended to develop an emotional relationship between an organisation and its customers". From the findings the UKZN was perceived positively by Gauteng businesses as a stakeholder.

UCT was perceived by both Gauteng and Pietermaritzburg business to have *academic excellence* and being internationally recognised. UCT's key strength was given as its *international recognition*. UCT has been perceived to be an excellent institution, hence it was accorded the status of being the top university in South Africa since consumers regard products or services

according to their perceptions about what these products or services are like, their benefits and their competitive position (Lamb *et al.* cited in Klopper *et al.* 2006, p.138).

WITS was perceived as being internationally recognised by Gauteng business. Past research had perceived Wits to be well established, traditional and competent (Chiweshe 2007, p.73). UP was described as having quality management and leadership, academic excellence and niche specialities such as Engineering. Rhodes was perceived as having research capability, management and leadership and a diverse student body and niche specialities all being listed twice. Niche specialities mentioned included English, Fine Arts and Journalism.

Stellenbosch had no clear description given by the respondents. The descriptors given were quality management and leadership, academic excellence, international recognition, business relevance, university experience, diversity of student body, transformed and had niche specialities. UJ was perceived as having international recognition.

The UKZN was regarded by Gauteng business as being best in programmes from the Medical school. Past research had revealed that the UKZN was best at medicine. Points of difference provide competitive advantage and giving substance as to why consumers buy the brand (Keller 2008, p.98).

## **6.5 Objective 4: Differences in perception of the UKZN between Gauteng business and UKZN Public and Corporate Affairs**

The UKZN, according to Gauteng business, is not attaining its desired position of being the leader in research. From the perceptions gathered from Gauteng business, the UKZN is perceived to be a university that best serves the demographics of the province, it occupies this being KwaZulu-Natal. These perceptions can also be related to those acquired from research involving business in Pietermaritzburg, who perceived the university to be English which can stem from the association of Victorian buildings evident on the Howard College and

Pietermaritzburg campuses of the UKZN. The perception that is accorded to the UKZN partly fits the sought perception of the UKZN.

Proctor (2000, p.206) states that there has been a development whereby there was recognition that “positioning is not simply an issue between the brand owner and customers, but between the brand owner and every one of its stakeholders”. Payne (1993, p.102) suggests that it is of no benefit to an organisation attempting to refute consumers’ perceptions of offerings.

Ideal marketing strategy commences with the correct target audience which leads to success of an organisation (Andreasen and Kotler 2008, p.138). For organisations to remain dominant and have long term viability there is a need to recognise the independence of their consumers (Naude and Ivy 1999, p.126).

According to business in Gauteng, the UKZN was best at programmes offered by the Medical School. The Public and Corporate Affairs Department also regard HIV/AIDS research which is done in the Medical School as a source of competitive advantage and ultimately one of the elements the UKZN is best at.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the objectives of the study, the UKZN needs to communicate its sought after position to Gauteng business a critical stakeholder, the UKZN was perceived to be an average university with regards to *academic excellence and business relevance*, the perceptions of the UKZN offered by Gauteng business were not as glowing as those offered by Pietermaritzburg business and the UKZN needed to improve on its research quality and quantity to improve on its *research capability* and fulfil its sought after position of “Premier University of African Scholarship”. On the basis of discussions and conclusions of the empirical findings, recommendations are offered.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers conclusions and recommendations with regards to the challenges and opportunities identified in this research. The recommendations are based upon a marketing management perspective. The limitations and prospects of future research of this exploratory study are presented in this chapter.

#### **Objective 1 Identifying the sought after position of the UKZN according to the Public and Corporate Affairs Department**

The UKZN was partially attaining its sought position as it had been rated the second most productive university in terms of research output in South Africa for the period 2007 and 2008. To further buttress the UKZN's attainment of its sought position, it became evident that the UKZN was ranked within the top 1% of universities in the world in research areas such as Clinical Medicine, Plant and Animal Sciences, Social Sciences and Ecology. It also became apparent that the UKZN had provided ground breaking research on the African continent in the fields of food security and sustainability in rural livelihood. UKZN was thus attaining its sought after position as can be evidenced by the recent international acclaim of the research that led to the creation of the microbicide gel that reduces the risk of HIV infection and genital herpes in women.

The UKZN seeks to be positioned as the 'Premier University of African Scholarship' based on its key competencies, however it is not accorded this position by Gauteng business as a stakeholder and consumer of UKZN's core service, namely, education. Gauteng business does not position the UKZN as the top institution based on attributes that the former regards as important for a university. The UKZN does seek to position itself on the most important attribute, this being *academic excellence*, however it is not perceived to the best on this attribute by the stakeholders. The UKZN is therefore not attaining its sought position.

There are various options available to the UKZN in order to be accorded its desired position. Brown (2005, p.99) and McDonald (1996, p.101) offer several options such as positioning closely to the leader as an 'acceptable alternative, positioning in unoccupied positions, un-served niches, changing the existing offering to better serve consumer needs and changing consumer perceptions of the UKZN if they are erroneous.

Given the various options referred to by Brown and McDonald, it is recommended the UKZN position itself in un-served niches. Furthermore, the failure for the UKZN to be positioned as the leading institution can be rectified through the use of marketing mix elements. The coordination of the UKZN's marketing mix elements will allow it to best serve its consumers on their most important needs and satisfy them better than the competition. According to Rix (2004, p.135), implementing a positioning strategy needs the consistent use of all elements of the marketing mix: price, distribution, promotion and the product must all support the desired position. A positioning strategy that is not buttressed by elements of the marketing mix is unlikely to be accepted by the consumers in the targeted segment (Rix 2004, p.135). With this in mind, the recommendations for the UKZN to be accorded the sought position are offered in the context of positioning a service and marketing mix elements.

## **Objective 2: Actual position accorded to the UKZN**

On the basis of theory provided by Naude and Ivy (1999, p.127), where employers are the consumer, the UKZN, according to Gauteng business, is not a leading institution whilst, in comparison, Pietermaritzburg business regarded the UKZN as the leading institution (Chiweshe 2007). This may have been due to proximity and regional loyalty. However, Gauteng business accorded UCT the position of top university in South Africa. This may be as a result of Gauteng business rating UCT's performance on important attributes better than UKZN. This meant that the UKZN was not meeting the needs of Gauteng business to the level of UCT on the attributes which they identified as being important to stakeholders.



### **Objective 3 Perceptions of the UKZN according to Gauteng business versus its competitors**

The perceptions identified by Gauteng and Pietermaritzburg business are how they perceive the and upon which they make their decisions. The perceptions identified in this study are in contrast with the stakeholders positioning of the UKZN since Pietermaritzburg business perceives UKZN to be the best institution in South Africa whereas Gauteng business on the other hand does not offer UKZN some glowing descriptions given by Pietermaritzburg business. From the perceptions, it is evident that Pietermaritzburg business regards UKZN as a university that serves the needs of the communities within its immediate environs and less likely to satisfy the needs of Gauteng business. Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.97) support this view as they state that an offering that has an identifiable identity and focus to a specific target segment's needs, will insure the purchase of the product or service on offer.

### **Objective 4: Differences in perception of the UKZN between Gauteng business and UKZN Public and Corporate Affairs**

There was a difference in perception of the UKZN since Public and Corporate Affairs Department states that the UKZN is accessible, transforming, redressing past imbalances, research driven and offers quality education whilst business in Gauteng were of the view that amongst other perceptions the UKZN was inaccessible, struggling as a brand, had compromised integrity, was colonial and had been unsuccessful in its rebranding. There are however also some perceptions from Gauteng business which are in concurrence with those of Public and Corporate Affairs Department such as transformed, focus on research and development and progressive.

The UKZN seeks to be positioned as the 'Premier University of African Scholarship' with a strong focus on research. In terms of the sought position of the UKZN, business as a stakeholder has not accorded the UKZN that position. The UKZN only appears nominally on a small number of responses as a third or fourth best university. With regard to the research rating, which the

UKZN seeks to be positioned as best, the UKZN was rated average in terms of research capability.

Given the research findings, UKZN was rated average in terms of research capability. The UKZN has to improve significantly on its research quantity and quality perceptions to become a premier university according to Gauteng business.

## **7.2 Positioning and Marketing Mix Recommendations**

Brown (2005, p.69) states that “positioning is configuring our total offering of goods, services, place and price to address the target group’s needs in a way that is attractively different from that offered by our competition”. According to Palmer (2001, p.176), an integral part in the development of a market position is the creation of a unified image that consistently and precisely supports the chosen market position. This message has to be consistently communicated. The marketing mix is the way in which organisations transform strategy from a statement of intent to effort in the market (Hooley *et al.* 2004, p.52). Each of the elements of the marketing mix should be designed to add up to the sought position and therefore, decisions on the marketing mix elements cannot be considered separately from the position pursued: if elements of the marketing mix do not operate in synch, the position achieved will be confused and confusing to consumers (Hooley *et al.* 2004 p.52).

This configuration is implemented via the marketing mix. According to Wilson and Gilligan (2005, p.354), positioning is a fundamental element of the market planning process, since decisions on positioning have a direct bearing on the entire marketing mix, essentially stating that the marketing mix is regarded as the tactical details of the positioning strategy. An example to illustrate this is a firm pursuing a high quality position, has to be shown not only in the quality of the product, but in every aspect of the marketing mix such as the price, distribution channels, advertising and after sales service.

Seeing as the research reveals what is important to the consumer in this case Gauteng business, the recommendations will focus on how to differentiate on what is important to the consumer which will provide a base to position on. According to (Ferrel and Hartline 2005, p.202) this position will be unique based on consumer benefits that other universities do not offer and this position will leverage UKZN's position and persuade stakeholders that the UKZN's offering will best meet their needs. *Academic excellence* was what Gauteng business regarded as an important attribute. The UKZN presently positions itself as a university of 'Premier African Scholarship' through innovations in research. The accorded position by Gauteng business was that the UKZN was not a leading university in terms of *academic excellence*. The recommendations will focus on the UKZN changing the accorded position to the desired position through the use of the marketing mix. However, the recommendations though have to be considered with caution as further quantitative research would be required to validate this.

### **7.2.1 Positioning Recommendations**

Organisations face strong competition within the marketplace and ultimately marketers have to find a unique and defensible position for their goods and services against alternate choices. The recommendation offered to the UKZN with regard to this step would be to position itself as an institute of academic excellence in the fields of HIV/AIDS and food security. Such a position would be unique to the tertiary environment in South Africa and would be the UKZN's point of difference, seeing that even on a global scale the UKZN is still a leader. Every brand, as maintained by Kotler (1997, p.296) and Lovelock (1996, p.164) must select an attribute and sell itself as the best at this attribute. According to Kotler (1997, p.296), consumers tend to remember 'the best' messages.

Keller (2008, p.118) states that the identification of the competitive advantage offers an initial way to position; however, once the target market understands how the offering relates to competing alternatives in the same category, it becomes imperative to deepen the associations related to positioning. With this in mind the recommendation to the UKZN would be that in the

communication with business (as a consumer of the education service) the UKZN should emphasise that it is among the global leaders in the field of HIV / AIDS research and has an unrivalled dominance in the field of food security globally. The benefits of such society-benefitting measures should also be communicated. The UKZN upon communicating this must continue to insure that its processes keep advancing to consistently deliver groundbreaking research in its field of expertise.

According to Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.101), positioning plays a major role in achieving the desired position in the minds' of existing and probable consumers. Ostaseviciute and Silburyte (2008, p.101) state that positioning is a continual process. Ferrel and Hartline (2005, p.202) also propose the continual reassessment of the target market, the firm's position and the position of competing offerings to ensure that the marketing program stays on track and also to identify emerging positioning opportunities. A recommendation to the UKZN would be that there be continual assessment of the various stakeholders to see whether the desired position is accorded and to identify new positioning opportunities where the UKZN has internal competency to offer a competitive advantage.

### **7.2.2 Marketing Mix Recommendations**

Perreault *et al.* (2008, p.75) state that the marketing mix provides existing and potential consumers with value through differentiation which creates a competitive advantage and offers reason as to why the consumer should consume the offering. Wiese (2008, p.89) states that universities require well-developed and comprehensive marketing mixes that are communicated throughout the university. All the elements of the marketing mix must augment the sought position.

### **7.2.2.1 Product**

The core product offered by the UKZN is that of education. In relation to positioning, education as the service should be based on what Gauteng business regarded the UKZN to be best at, this being programmes offered at the Medical School. The aspects of the programmes on offer at the Medical school which have lead to this positive perception should be adopted across the various programmes that the UKZN offers.

### **7.2.2.2 Process**

Perceptions of a service are based on the process of acquiring the service (Schouten and McAlexander 1989, p.70). The manner in which the UKZN delivers its service can provide a source of further competitive advantage since, according to Payne (1993, p.118), customer service influences perceptions greatly and can therefore be used as a tool of competitive advantage that cannot be easily copied. A recommendation to the UKZN with regards to its processes when delivering education as a service would be that, in all elements of service delivery, materials of the highest quality and well renowned experts in research should coordinate academic course delivery.

### **7.2.2.3 Price**

Wiese (2008, p.94) states that pricing can be used to position a service. A recommendation to the UKZN would be to obtain funding from organisations that have known and respected reputations in the fields of expertise such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which is globally known for advancing global innovation in health related aspects. Funding by such institutions would offer the association of a leader in a field of research. The UKZN could also provide additional bursaries to top research students.

#### **7.2.2.4 Place**

Place deals with the accessibility of the service on offer in terms of location in the most convenient way (Wiese 2008, p.107). A recommendation would be for the UKZN to actively partake in podcasting as a way of delivering learning, this being a novel method of learning which would offer further support to the position of a leader in innovative research based methods as this learning style has only been adopted in first world nations and adopting this would be novel in South Africa and on the African continent.

#### **7.2.2.5 Promotion**

Since the UKZN was not accorded the desired position by Gauteng business an aggressive promotion strategy can be used to change these perceptions. A recommendation would be that the UKZN communicates how their discoveries in the HIV/AIDS field will have a positive impact on the Gauteng business such as the decline in costly downtime due to an improvement in medical advancement through research from the UKZN's internationally acclaimed clinical research status. A further recommendation would be for the UKZN to partner with Gauteng businesses' various corporate social responsibility divisions on how to alleviate hunger through the UKZN's leading food security research.

Seeing as the UKZN should position itself as a university with academic excellence based on research, a major promotional strategy should also be executed to attain this position. The unique selling proposition must be communicated according to Kotler (1997, p.296), Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy (2008, p.398) and Walker *et al.* (2008, p.164). The UKZN should place greater emphasis on communicating its achievements to the corporate world, not only in the environs of KwaZulu-Natal but in the whole of South Africa and the African continent so as to attain the sought position of 'Premier University of African Scholarship'.

Eminent researchers involved in the groundbreaking research such as the microbide gel should take prominence in UKZN's external communication through adverts in local media during prime time. International level conferences should be offered as a platform to discuss research based issues and be a way of communicating the various ground breaking discoveries to the stakeholders of the UKZN. Systems such as the UKZN's automated telephone call waiting messages should inform the various stakeholders of the ground breaking research whilst on hold for their call to be attended to.

#### **7.2.2.6 People**

Wiese (2008, p.111) states that the behaviour of staff towards consumers has an impact on how the service is perceived. A recommendation to the UKZN would be that staff fully knows and understands the position the university seeks to attain and what kind of behaviours are attributable to such a sought position. The UKZN should have clear guidelines on how the university liaises with stakeholders to ensure consistency in the delivery of the various services that the university offers. Professionalism should be of the highest order when staff represent UKZN at various fora.

The UKZN staff should have access to all the innovative research that is occurring at the UKZN such that they may communicate it to other stakeholders in their general interactions creating a positive word of mouth. The UKZN should recruit internationally acclaimed researchers so as to support the desired position as these researchers have networks which generally have a positive perception of matters associated with them.

### **7.2.2.7 Physical Evidence**

Physical evidence enables consumers to make an evaluation of a service. Organisations can use physical evidence to attain a sought position (Wiese 2008, p.120). A recommendation to the UKZN would be that they continue with the massive expenditure on upgrading facilities and that such upgrades be at globally competitive standards.

Since as physical evidence deals with all the University's tangible elements, physical facilities at the UKZN must not become derelict and maintenance of all physical assets must be reflective of a world class university. A recommendation to the UKZN would be that the structures and equipment at all five campuses be world class to attain the sought position.

This exploratory study sought to offer a body of knowledge on the accorded position of the UKZN, however limitations were revealed from the empirical findings.

## **7.3 Limitations**

The investigation aimed to offer greater understanding regarding how to position the UKZN in a dynamic environment with increased competition and declining funding. In pursuit of this there was a major limitation, namely, the lack of participation by several of the companies contacted to be part of the research limited the ability of the findings to be generalisable to a greater population. Quantitative data would have helped this exploratory study on how to position the UKZN on the basis of the perceptions of an important stakeholder namely Gauteng business. Though there was a limitation in terms of the quantitative data, the exploratory nature of this research provides ground for the qualitative data to be a basis for future research. The quantitative data will need to be validated with future research with a larger sample size.



Despite the aforementioned limitation, the findings from this research offer some guidance as to how to position a non-profit institution such as a university in a competitive environment with declining resources.

#### **7.4 Recommendations for future research**

A larger sample size could be used to make the results generalisable. This could be achieved by working through the various Chambers of Commerce to improve the response rate.

Possible future research can be based on content analysis of how the UKZN Public and Corporate Affairs Department positions the UKZN. This can be done by looking at the various publications from the university's Public and Corporate Affairs Department and ascertain whether the communication strategy supports the desired position or not.

The UKZN can also continuously conduct research so as to ascertain what attributes may become important in an ever-changing environment. Such ongoing research identifies unoccupied positions in the university market that offer competitive advantage. This research will also allow the UKZN to either strengthen its accorded position or to position itself on the basis of what the consumers needs may be at the time.

The study could be broadened to compare the accorded and desired positioning of the 23 universities in South Africa from the perspective of the institutions public and corporate affairs departments. The findings of the South African study should be used as a comparative study against what are regarded as the top institutions in Africa outside South Africa

The study could be done on a national scale to see whether there are any industry sector differences in accorded positions for universities that are perceived to have expertise in certain fields but never a complete dominance.

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## **Appendix 1 UKZN Public and Corporate Affairs Department Interview Guide**

*Question 1: Which students does the UKZN seek to attain?*

*Question 2: Who are the UKZN'S competitors?*

*Question 3: What is the UKZN'S competitive advantage?*

*Question 4: What 5 qualities do you feel make a good university? Please rank them 1 being poor and 5 being excellent*

*Question 5: Please also rate how the UKZN' and its competitors from Question 1 perform on these qualities with 1 being poor performance and 5 being excellent performance.*

*Question 6: For matters regarding Public Relations, does the UKZN have policies for each campus or just UKZN as a whole?*

*Question 7: Where does the UKZN position itself in the tertiary studies market and what is its unique selling point and how does it communicate it?*

*Question 8: In your opinion, has the positioning strategy of the UKZN achieved the position it seeks in the market for tertiary students?*

*Question 9: In your opinion, how has the Gauteng business community, as a stakeholder, received UKZN's unique selling point?*

*Question 10: In your opinion, what five words best describe the UKZN?*

## **Appendix 2 Gauteng Business Questionnaire**

*Question 1: What, in your opinion, are the top 5 universities in South Africa?*

*Question 2: In 3 words how would you describe them and what is their key strength?*

*Question 3: What 5 qualities do you feel make a good university? Please rank them with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important. Please also rate how each university from Question 4 fares on these qualities with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.*

*Question 4: Does the organisation have a 'preferred' university from which to recruit employees? If so, which and why?*

*Question 5: Have you ever seen a UKZN advertisement? **YES or NO***

*Question 6: If yes, what appealed to you most?*

*Question 7: List 5 words that best describe the UKZN*

*Question 8: What programme do you feel the University of KwaZulu-Natal is at?*

*What field of business is this company in?*

*How many people are employed in this organisation?*

*What is your position in the organisation?*

*What gender are you?*

*What race are you?*

*What is your highest level of education?*

*What institution is this from?*

## **Appendix 3 Informed Consent**

### **University of KwaZulu-Natal** **School of Management** **Informed Consent Document**

I, Nigel Chiweshe, am a student currently registered for a Masters of Arts (Marketing) degree on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). A requirement for the degree is a dissertation and I have chosen the following topic:

“A Study of the Positioning Accorded to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) by Business in Gauteng Province”

Please note that this investigation is being conducted in my personal capacity. I can be reached on [Chiweshen@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Chiweshen@ukzn.ac.za). My academic supervisor is Prof. Debbie Vigar-Ellis, based in the School of Management on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She can be contacted on [vigard@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:vigard@ukzn.ac.za) or 0828988952.

The purpose of this research is to determine how the Gauteng business community, as a potential stakeholder for the University of KwaZulu-Natal, perceives the university. Information gathered in this study will include data retrieved from the questionnaire I request you to answer. Please note that your name will not be included in the report, only summary data will be included. Your anonymity and confidentiality is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Your participation in completing the questionnaire is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

I appreciate the time and effort it would take to participate in this study. I would be very grateful for your participation, as it would enable me to complete my dissertation and degree.

**Please complete the section below:**

I ..... (Full names of participant) hereby  
confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project,  
and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant.....

Company name: .....

Date.....